

POETICS OF WONDER

STUDIES IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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POETICS OF WONDER
Testimonies of the New Christian Miracles
in the Late Antique Latin World

by

Giselle de Nie



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Being is nothing other than the transmission of the historical [...] opening that constitutes for every historical being [...] the specific possibility of access to the world.

Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*

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DISCOVERING AND IMAGING THE NEW EXPERIENCE

In June of the year 386, a new kind of event began to occur in the western part of the Roman Empire that was to change the lives of untold many and to continue, modified or not, into our own times. After what appears to have been a long-time consensus — at least among the literate part of the population — that Christian miracles had in effect ceased after apostolic times because the world no longer needed to be converted, several suddenly happened publicly around a martyr's remains. While scholars have carefully traced the development of certain of the material and social manifestations of the martyr cult that began in the eastern part of the empire and spread to the west, the *new* intimate individual experiences themselves that collectively generated what eventually became a widespread and long-lasting miracle-embracing mentality seem to be no longer recoverable. How does an experience of 'miracle' come about? How is its mysterious transformational moment or process imaged, thought about? And how is this new 'model' of contemporary experience effectively communicated to others? Whereas the resemblances to pagan precedents and the continuing imbrications of religious phenomena with social and political power relations have been much studied, this interior experiential aspect — in fact, the central phenomenon — has been relatively little explored, no doubt also through lack of direct evidence. From 386 onwards in the west, however, testimonies of contemporary miracles do begin to appear — some of them enthusiastic, others pointing to doubt, indifference, or even resistance — that have not yet been studied as a coherent body of evidence. In this study, I bring these sources together and attempt to listen *affectively* to what they want to communicate about the new transformational experiences, hoping

I am grateful to Karl F. Morrison and Monic Slingerland for their comments upon an earlier version of this prologue.

thereby to extend my own and perhaps others' imaginative horizons concerning the modes of 'being' and 'becoming' in this world.

An approximate discerning of what an author, at least, thought of as the experiential dimensions of the new miracles becomes possible, I shall argue, because the late fourth- and early fifth-century Latin writers who began to describe miracles — ancient as well as contemporary — increasingly did so in a new way. Instead of resuming the relatively matter-of-fact, circumstantial, descriptive manner of the Gospels, they began to leave out material details and describe the miracles in terms of biblically based symbolic *imagery* intended to point to what they understood to be the invisible spiritual realities effecting these transformations. What we shall be looking at, then, is a new *imaginaire* (imagined lifeworld) of miracles, then being created and transmitted as a model for thinking about and shaping, if not also preparing for, subsequent actual experiences.¹ Thus, in the late sixth century, Gregory of Tours's miracle stories would show how its imagistic dynamics had become an unselfconscious mode of thought.²

What makes this imaging in connection with healing significant for us today is that it resembles not only the use of (implicit) images in timeless, effective shamanic and ritual healing practices, but also that in not infrequently equally effective modern western visualization therapies. Our ancient authors understood these images to point to autonomous, powerful spiritual realities — a designation that some psychologists today can understand. As will be explained hereafter, one important imaginative dimension which is revealed in all these healing strategies is the power of images as psycho-physical transformers — in fact, the power of the dynamic energy patterns they make visible and induce in the viewer. It seems likely that such mental imaging, alongside other not yet scientifically investigated autonomous energies, also helped precipitate the first new miracles.

Grounded in the contemporary Neoplatonist view of the existence of a higher invisible spiritual reality, this new imagistic kind of description appears to have come forth out of what recent scholarship has shown to be a meditative mentality, then gaining ground in the western part of the Roman Empire, in which the visual imagination and its associative, even poetic, dynamics became increasingly central. Well-known scholars have shown through evidence in various kinds of sources that the late fourth- and early fifth-century west experienced what I would designate as

¹ This term is borrowed from Le Goff, *L'Imaginaire médiéval*.

² See on this de Nie, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower*.

an 'imagistic turn'.³ They describe it as one from a preference for a continuous, discursively structured presentation of information organized from above, as it were, to that for associatively connected imagistic medallions that invited moments of affective, meditative interiorization, if not also of transformation. Patricia Cox Miller has recently persuasively posited a simultaneous 'material turn' as having in fact been made possible by this expansion of the imagination. For after a period that had emphasized transcendence at the expense of the material, what she designates as 'the corporeal imagination' or 'figural realism' caused material objects and bodies — and especially (bits of) martyrs' bodies — now to be experienced as epiphanies and transmitters of the divine.⁴ She connects its appearance in the mid-fourth century with a more positive evaluation of the temporal world now that Christianity was a recognized religion, but also with the christological controversies that had been taking place in the east and that had ended by a revaluation of the body and its senses because of Christ's incarnation.⁵ This new imaginative transformation of martyrs' bodies is likely to have played a central role in the sudden beginning of individual healings taking place at the martyrs' shrines, and we shall see it at work in the stories to be examined.

In the west, the new imaginative approach in general appears to have been closely connected with the late fourth-century elaboration of allegorical Bible exegesis: the divining of its hidden meanings through associatively meditating upon the discontinuous images in its presentation — now understood to reveal its transformational 'mysteries' in a way that precepts could not. Thus when we compare the first rendering into Latin verse of the Gospels in the year 330 with the second one a hundred years later, we see in the later author that a shift of approach to religious truth has taken place. Instead of the earlier poet's presentation of visible events larded with verbal precepts, the poet now does not attempt a continuous narrative and leaves out almost all verbal preaching to offer a succession of free-standing imaged presentations of the miracles manifesting their invisible dimensions to communicate the 'mysteries' of the faith. In what has felicitously been called 'the jeweled style' of contemporary aesthetics,⁶ the visible/invisible events of miracle have here become the new 'jewels'.

³ MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*; Miller, *Poetry of Thought in Late Antiquity*; Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*.

⁴ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, passim and pp. 1–17, 180–81.

⁵ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, pp. 3–4, 116.

⁶ Roberts, *Jeweled Style*, pioneered in presenting evidence of this new aesthetic. I have used his insights extensively in 'Poet as Visionary'.

To get as close as possible to the contemporary affective perceptions of the new experiences, I have chosen, after examining the differing views and attitudes expressed in the earliest brief testimonies, to carry out comprehensive as well as in-depth explorations into the individual imagistic patternings around these events in the contemporary writings that most elaborately describe miracles. As will be seen, I attempt to approach this material in the meditative/affective manner which appears to have been expected of the reader and listener. And I focus upon stories of miraculous healing. This is not only to keep the amount of material manageable but also because, as already indicated, they weave images of central Christian symbols into their descriptions that may, themselves, be understood to have played a role in effecting the transformations recorded. Whether we today interpret the healing power of these images to autonomous workings of 'nature' which will at some time be scientifically explained, to the dynamic patterns of an only indirectly knowable creative Ground implicated in, woven into, all that exists, or to the compassionate restorative grace of a personal God, the phenomenon remains what it is. As the title of this book shows, in my own thinking I choose to regard what is called 'miracle' with admiring 'wonder'.

In this prologue, I shall sketch a bird's eye view of the theoretical underpinnings of my approach to the sources that will also make it easier, if so desired, to read the individual chapters separately. The essentials of the chief theories in classical and late antiquity about perception and imagination that formed the background of the medieval and modern ones will first be very briefly indicated; later chapters will treat in more detail the aspects of these that are relevant to the authors discussed. Next, I shall turn to some modern insights — about perception, imagination, and the transforming power of images — that have both yielded the guiding methods I have applied to my materials and, consequently, undergirded my conclusions. With a few words from postmodern philosophers about the value of the kind of historical remembering undertaken here, I thereafter attempt to give it a place in our present-day thinking about ourselves and our lifeworld. In the last section of this prologue I shall give an indication of the historical context, as well as a brief description, of the sources to be treated. The Introduction that follows will describe my approach to the phenomenon of miracle in the context of the modern views, and then presents an overview of the early Christian tradition upon which our fourth-century authors drew that will serve as background to the first reactions to the new miracles discussed in the chapters that follow.

The Antique Background

Before the late antique period, images had not been regarded as bridges to divine truth, quite the contrary. The early dualist philosophy of Plato (428–348 BC) had rejected all — necessarily sensory — images as inferior representations of aniconic divine exemplars, which could only be contemplated by the intelligence. This view was to have a long history. His late dialogue, the *Timaeus*, however, finally admits that the highest kind of spiritual knowledge can be gained through mental images of these granted by divine inspiration, not through the intelligence or the faculty of reason, but in an extraordinary, non-rational, kind of consciousness.⁷ Against this view, however, his pupil Aristotle (384–322 BC) subsequently insisted upon the primacy of sensory experience instead and treated the imagination as no more than the mediator between sensory experience and intellectual understanding; the third-century Stoics' later association of the imagination with the degrading passions made the faculty also a philosophically suspect one.⁸ This composite view tended to predominate until the late antique period. As for the Bible, it contains forms of all these views. Its prophetic visions indicate that divinely given mental images and auditions could reveal God's purposes, but it also repeatedly warns against possible deception by arbitrary or demonic dreams and visions.⁹

In the third century AD however, the Neoplatonist pagan philosopher Plotinus (c. 205–c. 270) mitigated the early Platonic strict dualism that continued in the philosophical tradition by conceiving of the universe, not as irreducibly split between matter and spirit, but as a continuing emanation from the inaccessible highest reality through successive reflections of *images* shaping a matter that participated in an ever more derivative way in the original Forms, Ideas, or archetypes. Nevertheless, he continued Plato's dualism by regarding human access to this highest reality as taking place, not through these images, but in a direct, abstract intuition, beyond imagination, through the intelligence or reason. His contemporary, however, the Alexandrian exegete Origen (c. 183/86–c. 252/54), carrying on the earlier tradition of the Hellenistic Jew Philo (c. 13 BC–c. 54 AD), launched the Christian search for hidden spiritual meanings and pointers to higher realities

⁷ Bundy, *Theory of Imagination*, pp. 19–59.

⁸ Bundy, *Theory of Imagination*, pp. 60–82, 87–104; Kearney, *Wake of Imagination*, pp. 79–113.

⁹ Kearney, *Wake of Imagination*, pp. 37–78.

in the images and sayings of the Bible.¹⁰ A somewhat later pagan writer who was influenced by the symbolic Egyptian religion, Iamblichus (c. 250–c. 330), developed a liturgical approach that invited the gods' presence and revelation through adducing symbolic objects or performing symbolic meditations or rituals by which they were thought to be attracted.¹¹ All this shows that, for some prominent writers at least, the notion of the image as potentially mediating divine truth, if not also as somehow participating in the divine exemplar which it makes visible and bringing it to the spot, was so to speak 'in the air'. Whereas Christian allegorical exegesis had continued since Origen in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, it began in the west only with Hilary (Hilarius) of Poitiers (c. 315–c. 367), Jerome (Hieronymus) (c. 347–420), and Ambrose (Ambrosius) of Milan (c. 340–97) — all of whom had eastern connections.

Modern Views of Perception

The psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1911–91) presents a modern form of Aristotle's philosophical notion of the mediating function of the imagination when he states that the information that comes to us through the senses

is not directly transformed into a conscious report. What is consciously perceived is imagery which is created by the organism itself. [...] The world we perceive is a dream we learn to have from a script we have not written. It is neither our capricious construction nor a gift we inherit without work.¹²

Modern theorists of imagination agree that not only our consciously imaginary world, but also the one which we tend to regard as 'real' are both the result of our 'figuration'.¹³ The description by art historian Rudolf Arnheim (1904–2007) of the process of perception of sensory data complements Tomkins's assessment. He writes:

Visual knowledge acquired in the past helps not only in detecting the nature of an object or action appearing in the visual field; it also assigns the present object a place in the system of things constituting our total view of the world. Thus almost every act of perception involves subsuming a given particular phenomenon under some visual concept. [...]

¹⁰ Bundy, *Theory of Imagination*, pp. 117–45.

¹¹ Bundy, *Theory of Imagination*, pp. 134–38. See Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, and Clarke, *Iamblichus' De mysteriis*.

¹² Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness*, I, 13.

¹³ Kearney, *Poétique du possible*, p. 263.

perception and recognition are inseparably intertwined [...] [as in the] interaction between the structure suggested by the stimulus configuration and the components brought into play by the knowledge, expectations, wishes and fears of the observer. [...] a powerful need can impose an image of the observer's making on the scantiest objective condition. [...] Often, however, there is enough ambiguity in the stimulus to let the observer find different shape patterns in it as he searches for the best fitting model among the ones emerging from memory storage.¹⁴

Accordingly, we shall often see our late antique authors consciously *choose* to recognize a miracle rather than admit to a perfectly possible coincidence. How these visual concepts or models of perception are acquired in the religious sphere is explained by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926–2006). He defines religion, as

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.¹⁵

The narrative of a particular miracle — for instance, that of a case of instant healing upon contact with a holy person or object — can be regarded as such a symbol or, in Arnheim's terms, visual concept. According to Geertz, its presentation as 'utter actuality' in a ritual context — such as that of the reading of a miracle story during Church liturgy by an 'authority' (the lector, priest, or bishop) — would make it part of the visual concepts in memory storage that would be applied to a phenomenon in a religious context.¹⁶ For, as Geertz writes, a story presented in this context contains and presents not only *models of* the reality postulated by religion, but also — and especially — *models for* what he calls 'producing' that reality in the perception of the worshipper.¹⁷ If the worshipper, then, is motivated to see or experience miracles happening, he will interpret what he sees or himself experiences according to the models he has heard or read about.

Another modern discovery about perception, however, also comes into play. The psychologist Jerome Singer (b. 1924) has drawn attention to incidental overlaps between mental imagery and sensory input, saying that it is a

¹⁴ Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, pp. 90–91; Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', pp. 9–14, elaborates upon this.

¹⁵ Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', p. 90.

¹⁶ As for instance in Gregory of Tours (Gregorius Turonensis), *Virtutes sancti Martini*, II. 29, MGH SSrM, 1. 2, p. 620, lines 1–4. See on this de Nie, 'The Language in Miracle — the Miracle in Language', p. 27.

¹⁷ Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', pp. 124, 112–13, 118, respectively.

by now reasonably well-established finding that imagery and perception seem in effect to be manifestations of a common brain process (Segal 1971) and probably use the same common pathways in the brain. [...] if one imagines a particular object as if appearing on a blank screen and if a picture of the object or if almost any visual signal is flashed faintly, but ordinarily discriminably, on the screen while the subject is imagining, the imager may not be aware of the 'real' stimulus in his visual field.¹⁸

All this modern evidence shows that remembered mental images, including those heard or read in miracle stories, play a hinge role in the process of perception, and thus experience, of sensory data.

Modern Views of Imagination

In the High Middle Ages, formal Christian theology, although practicing allegorical exegesis, continued the early Platonic dualism. Eventually it came to prefer the transmitted Aristotelian and Stoic views of the imagination as purely mimetic — that is, as merely copying what is seen — and as no more than the mediator between sensory perception and intellectual understanding.¹⁹ In his *L'Imagination symbolique*, Gilbert Durand (b. 1921) has described the history of the concept of imagination since the Middle Ages as a continuation of this Aristotelian view. He describes the ontological status of images as having been signally 'reduced' by certain specific thinkers: the philosopher-mathematician René Descartes (1596–1650) rejected the truth value of all images, regarding them as pure 'fancy'; in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) reduced all images to sexual fantasies; and in the middle of the twentieth century, the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009) interpreted them as visualized social patterns.²⁰ Thus it was not until modern times that, alongside the imagination's mimetic capacity with regard to sensory experience, its constructive potentiality for apprehending and creating a different but very real, affective, kind of truth began to be appreciated. The philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) was the first to put images and symbols on equal philosophical footing with concepts as a means to truth; his ideas were communicated to the English-speaking world especially by Suzanne Langer (1895–1985).²¹

¹⁸ Singer, *Imagery and Daydream Methods*, pp. 175–76. The reference is to *Imagery*, ed. by Segal.

¹⁹ Kearney, *Wake of Imagination*, pp. 114–250.

²⁰ Durand, *L'Imagination symbolique*, pp. 21–61. Cf. Eliade, *Images and Symbols*.

²¹ Durand, *L'Imagination symbolique*, pp. 62–65; Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*.

More recently, the Christian philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) has pointed to imagination's *innovative* function. In the process of *poesis* — the 'birth' of a poem's images that make visible the patterns of awareness or feeling experienced at that moment — it operates as a 'finding' that cannot be distinguished from an 'inventing' (the latin verb *invenio* means both). In this way it brings into focus and makes visible an experience that does not yet have a form or a name either by fitting it into a similar pattern in an image in memory storage or by constructing a new image by combining elements there.²² We will see this happening in our sources. Significantly, however, Ricoeur also attempted to overcome the perceived disjunction between imagination and reason. He held that the imagination's images can be fully understood only by applying to them the critical hermeneutics of discursive reason.²³ Included in this, however, is what he called participatory hermeneutics; this is the mimetism and figuration involved in the reader's re-enactment and 'appropriation' of the narrative identity in a text.²⁴ Finally, he pointed to the fact that, alongside the imagination's innovations in discourse, it can also inspire and direct action by imagining alternatives to existing situations and all kinds of new possibilities.²⁵ Miracles, of course, presented an invitation to this kind of imagining.

Another prominent early twentieth-century proponent of the appreciation of images, the Islamic scholar-philosopher Henri Corbin (1903–78), adopted a Platonic base structure: an autonomous spiritual realm with enduring invisible patterns; in Sufism, these manifest themselves to consciousness as images.²⁶ Thus what our late antique Christian authors had recognized as a separate spiritual reality containing autonomous divine exemplars which had been indirectly revealed in the Bible, Corbin similarly described from his Sufi source as spiritual configurations existing autonomously in what he called the 'imaginal' sphere of reality; they could be discerned by what he regarded as the *epiphanic* function of the imagination.²⁷ Certain perceptions which our authors will be seen to recount appear to be unprecedented; are they epiphanies?

²² Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, p. 306.

²³ Joy, 'Images, Imagination', pp. 107–08.

²⁴ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, III, 157–92.

²⁵ Ricoeur, 'Imagination in Discourse and in Action'.

²⁶ Joy, 'Images, Imagination'.

²⁷ Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice*. See Durand, 'The Imaginal'.

A Platonically structured view of imagination is also central in the empirical and phenomenological approach to human experience of the psychiatrist Carl G. Jung (1875–1961). His phenomenological approach does not exclude faith or experienced certainties, he writes, but lacks the means to prove their validity in a scientific sense; it can only say, ‘this is how the psyche behaves’.²⁸ In Jung’s modern medical terminology: alongside a personal unconscious sphere that belongs to the cerebro-spinal nervous system and perceives things as isolated objects, a sphere which he called the universal, impersonal, and inherited ‘collective unconscious’ is identified as the locus of religious or spiritual experience. Based upon the sympathetic nervous system, it has its own unitive awareness of itself as identical with all of reality and is not contained by the categories of space and time; there is evidence that it can communicate too.²⁹ In this unconscious sphere, Jung noted the presence of what he called inherited primordial instinctual patterns or ‘archetypes’, dynamic, ambiguous, and never fully apprehendable, that are universally present in humankind; influencing perception and behaviour, they enter consciousness through images in dreams, visions, and what he called ‘active imagination’ or focused meditation.³⁰ They differ from the Platonic eternal Forms or Ideas, he writes, in that they are not static but dynamic patterns.³¹ He writes that in processes of psychic transformation — and these tend to be central in events experienced as miracles — an archetype of ‘rebirth’ may be at work in ‘an experience in and of images’ that proceeds dialogically and mimetically through an affective-associative ‘logic’ of resemblance and analogy.³² The ‘logic’ of images, then, differs from that of the rational faculty. I shall argue that clear cases of this kind of logic becoming palpable reality appear in our sources.

In 1981, the theoretical physicist David Bohm’s *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* explained the new probabilistic science and quantum theories to a larger public. The historian-psychologist Jean Dierkens’s view of archetypes appears to

²⁸ Jung, ‘Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy-tales’, pp. 207–08.

²⁹ Jung, ‘Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious’, pp. 19–22; ‘Concept of the Collective Unconscious’, p. 43; and ‘Concerning Rebirth’, p. 142.

³⁰ Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, pp. 31–73; Jung, ‘Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious’, pp. 4–5; Jung, ‘Concept of the Collective Unconscious’, pp. 43–49. See also Joy, ‘Images, Imagination’, p. 106; Moon, ‘Archetypes’; and Fraas, ‘Archetype’.

³¹ Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, pp. 49–50.

³² Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, passim. Durand, *L’Imagination symbolique*, pp. 65–72, also considers Jung as one of those who rehabilitated the epiphanic function of the image.

base itself upon Bohm's view of a constantly creative, but not directly knowable, cosmic Ground whose patterns are reflected and active in all phenomena:

Although probably finding himself within a subsystem that is unable to apprehend the larger whole of which it is a part, man has certain possibilities of apprehending the structures that are out of his reach, — just as one part of a hologram possesses the totality of the structure of the object 'photographed' [...]. The archetypes may thus be the psychic traces of the fundamental creative laws of the universe, and the symbolic approach is the most certain way to their understanding.³³

In this study, I indeed intend to approach what appear to be creative patterns manifested in the descriptions of miracles via the symbolism used to point to them.

I hope that it will be clear by now that it is not my intention to 'reduce' or nullify the phenomenon of 'miracle';³⁴ for me as for Augustine, 'scientifically' explainable processes are part of the 'miracle' of all that exists. Anticipating modern scientific discoveries, he did not think that an extraordinary event or 'miracle' necessarily required direct divine intervention, speaking of hidden seed-like patterns or 'reasons' (*rationes seminales*) inserted in man at Creation that, also without direct divine intervention, could later produce up-to-then unknown effects.³⁵ My attempt to discern the contours of the dynamic patterns in the late antique authors' symbolic imagery around miracles, therefore, is simply a way to discover more about how our human lifeworld has been individually experienced and thought to 'work'.

Modern Views of the Transforming Power of Images

Those who have listened to Wagner's operas will agree that it is not difficult to understand a musical motif as a sounded representation of a specific pattern of

³³ Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', pp. 22–23: 'Bien que se trouvant vraisemblablement dans un sous-système incapable d'appréhender le système lui-même, l'homme a certaines possibilités d'approcher les structures qui le dépassent, — tout comme une partie d'un hologramme possède la totalité de la structure de l'objet 'photographié' [...]. Les archétypes seraient ainsi les traces psychiques des lois fondamentales et créatrices de l'univers, et l'approche symbolique est la voie privilégiée de cette compréhension.' Although focused upon explaining apparitions through modern psychological theories as not necessarily either religious or pathological phenomena, this article, as will be indicated, adduces many of the same insights and theories that will figure in this book; many of these are also applied to medieval miracles in Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*. However, on p. 215 and elsewhere, they see the role of archetypes only in apparitions of the wise old man, the mother, etc.

³⁴ Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, however, do seem to do this.

³⁵ See on this de Vooght, 'Notion philosophique'.

feeling. In *À la recherche du temps perdu* by Marcel Proust (1871–1922), the hearing of Vinteuil's musical phrase — associated with a particular state of mind — induced an instant involuntary return to this state.³⁶ The fact, however, that an image, or an associative cluster of images too, mental or material, can be the visible representation of such a pattern — Proust pioneered in this too — is not well known. To distinguish it from a static configuration, I have coined the term 'dynamic pattern' — meaning a configuration of psychic energy — as a translation and extension of the term *psychisme dynamique* (psychic dynamism) utilized by Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962). This term is used by him for the specific psychic energy pattern experienced in the mind when, during reading, it *involuntarily* mimics and thereby replicates the affective movement — for instance that of a flight or a fall — contained in a particular image.³⁷ Such a verbalized image would itself be the precipitate of the writer's 'discovery/invention' of it in his poetic imagination, perhaps the visualization of an unconscious pattern of feeling, or an epiphanic intuition of an autonomous pattern of invisible energy. With material pictures, however, the same involuntary affective mimesis has been shown to take place.³⁸ The import of this, usually unnoticed, shaping or transforming power of images is hard to exaggerate. For through this involuntary replication, images bypass rational processes and connect directly with the imagistic, dreamlike awareness of the unconscious mind, from which our spontaneous impulses, feelings, and actions often derive.³⁹

Thus, although few people appear to realize it, images themselves definitely 'work' upon us and with us. Modern psychotherapy has rediscovered the healing qualities of specific types of images. Robert Desoille (1890–1966) was one of the first to experiment with what he called *le rêve éveillé* or waking dream, in which psychic problems were discovered (by spontaneously arising images) and therapeutic processes were guided through verbalized daydreaming.⁴⁰ This is a state in which sensory perception is diminished and the subject watches his imagistic or dream consciousness produce images spontaneously or in response to suggestions

³⁶ Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, I: *Du côté de chez Swann*, p. 283.

³⁷ Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes*, p. 12. Cf. Durand, *L'Imagination symbolique*, pp. 72–85.

³⁸ Freedberg, *Power of Images*, *passim*.

³⁹ Before Jung, William James said something similar about what he called the mystical or supernatural region in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 388–89.

⁴⁰ Durand, *L'Imagination symbolique*, pp. 119–20, describes his work and mentions Desoille, *Le Rêve éveillé en psychothérapie*.

by the therapist. A prominent psychologist building on Desoille's work, Roberto Assagioli (1888–1974), quotes an earlier psychotherapist as saying that 'Every image has in itself a motor-drive' or 'images and mental pictures tend to produce the physical conditions and external acts corresponding to them'.⁴¹ In this way the emotions can be healed through the meditative internalization — and thereby affective mimesis — of life-enhancing images and symbols; an affective visualization, for instance, of the blossoming of a rosebud would initiate an analogous pattern of inner blossoming in the subject.⁴² Although, unfortunately, the effects are not the same for everyone, the process can extend to the healing of the body.⁴³

In traditional societies this kind of healing through experiencing images is likely to take place through symbols ritually enacted in an altered state of consciousness or trance.⁴⁴ Thus the psychologist and cultural anthropologist René Devisch (b. 1944) reports that certain — culturally acquired — images that are metaphors or symbols of vitality and oneness with the life-group and the cosmos can become what he calls preverbal transformational devices woven into the texture of the body itself, so that ritually enacting these can activate them to effect physical as well as emotional healing.⁴⁵ When seen or imagined, then, affect-laden images are involuntarily interiorly mimicked and thereby affect the mind and body directly in transmitting the configuration or pattern of emotional energy which they make visible. This kind of healing ritual should not be confused with social and political rituals. For instead of being consciously enacted and relying upon the consent and participation of others, who may have varying and contrary viewpoints and motives to manipulate the situation, it is a matter of the individual and his imagination.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, p. 144, apparently citing Baudoin, *Suggestion and Autosuggestion*, without page reference.

⁴² Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, pp. 213–15.

⁴³ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*. See also Harpur, *Uncommon Touch*. A synthesis of the new viewpoints and their applicability to biblical as well as present-day miracles is Kelsey's *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*. See also Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity*. Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, pp. 187–91 and 326–27, points to the positive effect of mass psychology in effecting cures at a shrine as compared with the lack of this encouraging energy in cures at a private home.

⁴⁴ See on this Sargent, *Mind Possessed*. Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', pp. 19, 28–31, also discusses these.

⁴⁵ Devisch, *Weaving the Threads of Life*, p. 280.

⁴⁶ Buc, *Dangers of Ritual*, contests the validity of comparing social rituals in non-literate societies with those in medieval society.

Shamanic healing is another version of this; it may not be well known that it not only is perhaps the oldest kind of healing known to man, but also continues in modern forms all over the world.⁴⁷ Its cures have been compared to those in the New Testament.⁴⁸ Biomedical research has now furthermore shown scientifically that physical healing in this context can occur when the mind's mimesis of the specific energy patterns in sound and/or images biochemically induces specific, traceable molecules to initiate or activate analogous patterns in the mind-body.⁴⁹

Alongside the transformational effects of mental imaging or symbolic enactment, however, there is also substantial scientifically obtained evidence that as yet not fully registerable exterior spiritual energies channelled through objects or persons may introduce or activate bio-energy patterns in the mind-body — as well as in animals, plants, and even enzymes and cancer cells in vitro.⁵⁰ These energies too, however, are still a controversial phenomenon. When Late Antique persons spoke of the activities of 'spirits' and 'demons' they could have experienced these exterior energies, as well as the unconscious interior energy patterns; for, as Jung says, the latter have 'a certain autonomy' and, if not made conscious and addressed, can indeed take over or 'possess' the personality.⁵¹

Postmodern Views of Imagination

In his *Poetics of Imagining* (1998), Richard Kearney describes the transition, in recent times, from the modern philosophical notion of a constructive imagination, believing in its creative capacities as relating to some objective 'reality' attested to

⁴⁷ The classic study is that of Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*. Its information is updated with modern examples from all continents in Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*.

⁴⁸ Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*, p. 40, and Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 74–140.

⁴⁹ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*. See Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, pp. 258–63. A whole new branch of medicine — psychoneuroimmunology — has in fact grown up since the 1970s that explores the relations, formerly denied to exist, between brain, emotion, and the various bodily systems; see Ader, 'Historical Perspectives on Psychoneuroimmunology'.

⁵⁰ Again, Harpur's *Uncommon Touch*, passim, is most informative on this. See also Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', p. 22. Watson, *Nature of Things*, treats of many different kinds of events; Sanford, *Healing Light*, is very practical and informative on subtle energies in healing, as is Krieger, *Therapeutic Touch*.

⁵¹ Jung, 'Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious', p. 39.

by 'reason' or science, to the postmodern one of a 'parodic' imagination as a labyrinth of mirrors with no connection to any objective or timeless foundation.⁵² As Gianni Vattimo writes, the late modern subject 'when it turns toward itself, toward the depth of its consciousness, is not confronted by the certainty of the Cartesian *cogito* ['I think, therefore I am'], but by the *intermittences du coeur* [the heart's intermittencies] described by Proust, the narrations of the mass media, the mythologies rediscovered by psychoanalysis'.⁵³ He continues: 'the combined effect of demythization, and of the subsequent discovery of the myth of demythization, is not the rebirth of myth but its continuation in a *weakened* form'.⁵⁴ He means not the 'primitive' unselfconscious myth, a view of myth that results in archaism, or one that produces cultural relativity, but 'an overcoming of the opposition between rationalism and irrationalism (through a weakening of the notion of truth) that opens a new possibility for thought'.⁵⁵ And he concludes:

having discovered the human, all too human basis of the systems of value, human culture can develop only if the creation of values continues, also with the new consciousness of their earthly essence; we have to keep on dreaming, while conscious of the fact that all is a dream.⁵⁶

It resembles Tomkins's 'dream' but now recognized and accepted as the best kind of 'truth' we can hope to attain. Thus, to replace metaphysics, he speaks of 'the remembering of the spiritual forms of the past, or even their enjoyment (their returning to life) understood in an "aesthetic" sense'.⁵⁷ This would be truer to 'reality' than any metaphysical thought because these 'spiritual forms' are glimpses of individually experienced perceptions. They are 'overtures' or openings, he writes, given from a 'Ground or Same'

that gives itself to us only in and *through* these overtures (by traversing them rather than using them as a means). This historicism is nevertheless tempered [...] by an awareness that

⁵² Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*.

⁵³ Vattimo, 'Myth and the Destiny of Secularization', pp. 361–62.

⁵⁴ Vattimo, 'Myth and the Destiny of Secularization', pp. 360–61. (The revised version of this article published in *RES*, 9 (1985), quoted by Kearney (*Poetics of Imagining*, p. 191), was not available to me.)

⁵⁵ Vattimo, 'Myth and the Destiny of Secularization', pp. 361–62.

⁵⁶ Vattimo, 'Myth and the Destiny of Secularization', pp. 360–61.

⁵⁷ Vattimo, *La Fin de la modernité*, p. 181: 'La remémoration des formes spirituelles du passé ou bien encore leur jouissance (leur reviviscence) entendue en un sens "esthétique".' Strangely, this passage does not occur in the English translation.

the history of such overtures is not 'only' the history of errors [...] but rather is Being itself.⁵⁸
(emphasis original)

He adds: 'The word that best defines this approach to the past and to everything that is transmitted to us (even in the present) is *pietas* [devout respect]'.⁵⁹ This approach to truth, then, would wish to remember and re-create in an aesthetic way narrative texts presenting historical experience as now the only criterion for finding and formulating human values. Why the emphasis upon 'aesthetic'? Ihab Hassan wrote:

I do not know how to give literature or theory or criticism a new hold on the world, except to re-mythify the imagination, at least locally, and bring back the reign of wonder into our lives. In this, my own elective affinities remain with Emerson: 'Orpheus is no fable: you have only to sing, and the rocks will crystallize; sing, and the plant will organize; sing, and the animal will be born.'⁶⁰

All these thoughts seem singularly relevant to the careful 'remembering' of imaginative miracle stories as a poetics of wonder: they sing of healing transformations. I hope that the modern writers quoted would agree that our late antique ones are myths or dreams in the positive sense, and that we need not share the specific ideological certainties of the authors whose writings we examine to appreciate their testimonial value.

For in late Antiquity the experience of miracle gradually became a collective dream that described ways of enhancing one's life and that of others. Kearney speaks of finding the 'other' in 'exemplary narratives of imagination', 'recalling what has been silenced and projecting what has not yet been spoken' as the historical criteria for our ethical judgements.⁶¹ He distinguishes three ethical functions of the imagination: utopian (imagining a better world), testimonial (presenting evidence of good or bad deeds not yet sufficiently recognized), and empathic (imagining oneself as the other).⁶² We shall see all these in our sources as images of 'heavenly' realities transforming earthly ones. As the historian of religion Michel Meslin (1926–2010) wrote: 'To understand however little of the essence of a religious fact, we keep having to go from its historical and social aspects to its deep structures of thought,

⁵⁸ Vattimo, *End of Modernity*, p. 175.

⁵⁹ Vattimo, *End of Modernity*, pp. 175–76.

⁶⁰ Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn*, p. 182; a slight extension of the quote in Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, p. 235.

⁶¹ Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, p. 229.

⁶² Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, p. 233.

of the spoken language, and of the human unconscious.’⁶³ Both William James and Jung found that the deep structures that emerge from the unconscious through language frequently appear as affect-laden (composite) mental images that, without our knowing it, select and shape motivation and perception, and especially the experience of transformational moments and processes. Since miracles are almost always in some sense transformational events, the focus of this study will be on discovering the dynamically patterned images which the late antique authors ‘found’ during their meditations to describe them. The sources, long not taken seriously as valid descriptions of human experience, appear to show us an instance of what Kearney more generally describes as an ‘other’ that ‘comes to imagination sometimes as laughter from a utopian future, sometimes as playback of the forgotten voices of history’. And speaking about the historian’s attempt to re-present ostensibly intractable older historical material in an imaginative way so that its unique message may be appreciated by his/her contemporaries, he writes: ‘The imagination’s poetic vocation to sing rejoins its ethical vocation to remember.’⁶⁴

The Historical Context of the Sources

Turning now to the concrete historical context of the texts that will be examined: in 1981, the seminal text *The Cult of the Saints* by Peter Brown (b. 1935) persuasively identified social, economic, and imaginative factors that shaped the rise of the new fourth-century cult of the martyrs in the Mediterranean countries; subsequent studies have added a great deal of knowledge of the many aspects of this religious revolution.⁶⁵ In his analysis of the imaginative and sociological dynamics of its miracles, however, Brown took many of his examples from the sixth century. The sources of the period between 386 and 460, however, exhibit the first reactions to the new phenomenon of contemporary Christian miracles: how their dynamic,

⁶³ Meslin, *Pour une science des religions*, p. 260: ‘Pour comprendre tant soit peu de l’essence du fait religieux, il nous faut aller sans cesse de l’historique et du social vers les structures profondes de la pensée, du langage parlé et de l’inconscient humain.’

⁶⁴ Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, p. 235.

⁶⁵ Delehaye, *Origines du culte des martyrs*, began the intensive study of saints’ cults. Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, gave the decisive impetus for this new research. An example of this is *Les Fonctions de saints dans le monde occidental*, ed. by Tilliette. Further research is described in *Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Howard-Johnston and Hayward. On Gaul, see Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul*; Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*; and Beaujard, *Le Culte des saints en Gaule*.

potentially life-changing, dimension, fully accepted as having existed in the time of Christ and the apostles but regarded as having ceased thereafter, was then first experienced and thought about.

Recent scholarship has reconstructed the outlines of ideas and practices that, earlier, must have built up the expectation and prepared hearts and minds for the actual experience of the new contemporary miracles around the martyrs' remains.⁶⁶ Gratefully assuming as background these different kinds of extant evidence in the existing literature, I have attempted to discover only what may have been, if not the now irrecoverable actual lived experience of the new miracles, at least the perception and understanding of this by others when they searched their imagination. The most elaborate of the earliest written attempts to make sense of the new phenomenon have been approached as much as possible according to and within their own patterns of thinking and feeling, and their views presented and translated in their own images and phrasing — modern parallels being adduced only to help the reader understand and follow this relatively unfamiliar kind of discourse. The choice to preserve the uniqueness of each source makes the composition of this book — perhaps aptly — resemble a favourite late antique one: a series of associatively related medallions.⁶⁷ As already indicated, its inner continuity and coherence is the one cluster of evidence whose various permutations I have attempted to follow through all the reactions to the new phenomenon: that of the *dynamic, affective patterns* discernible in the verbal images which the authors 'found' in their imagination when they thought about the experience of miracle. It looks as though these image-patterns, disseminated through their writings and recurring in subsequent sources, went on to become the mental models through which miracles were thought about, perceived, and — perhaps — experienced for many centuries thereafter.⁶⁸ They are even recognizable in miracles recorded in our own time.

As already indicated, the Introduction, after first situating the approach taken in this study within the range of modern views of miracle, traces the understanding of the notion of miracle and its post-apostolic cessation in the early Christian tradition; it ends with a look at Juvenius's decorated poetic version of the Gospels as the first biblical epic. The first chapter then begins with Ambrose's appropriation of the martyr cult in 386 and his nevertheless reserved view of miracle as

⁶⁶ For instance in Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'orient*; Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*; Boyarin, *Dying for God*; and Volp, *Tod und Ritual in den christlichen Gemeinden der Antike*.

⁶⁷ On the aesthetic ideal of this period, see Roberts, *Jeweled Style*.

⁶⁸ On the unreserved acceptance of the possibility of miracles and what this entailed in the early Middle Ages, see Dierkens, 'Réflexions sur le miracle au haut Moyen Âge', pp. 13, 29.

inferior to doctrine in the experience of the faith. Subsequently, it examines in their chronological order the briefer bits of evidence in the west, in sermons and letters, of the various, and sometimes contrary, reactions to the reappearance of Christian miracles. Chapter 2 analyses the passionate but terse description by the young lawyer-turned-ascetic Sulpicius Severus (c. 360–c. 420), ten years after Ambrose's discovery, of the miracles of the west's first known living holy man of power, the monk-bishop Martin of Tours (c. 316–97). The poems of Sulpicius's friend Paulinus of Nola (353–431), celebrating the miracles of the south Italian martyr Felix of Nola (died c. 260) and enunciating a distinct theory of divine inspiration, are the subject of the third chapter. Although not generally recognized as such perhaps because of their poetic mode, these poems are the first more or less continuous record of such events at a shrine in the western cult of martyrs.

Augustine's long drawn-out change of mind about contemporary miracles is by far the most fully documented one in this period of the ideas and daily exigencies influencing their reception by an individual. Chapter 4 will look at the reasons he gave for his ongoing resistance to accepting these, but also at his allegorical exegesis that dissected the stories of Christ's miracles into nuggets of doctrine that may or may not be related to what happens in the story — the same logocentric view that Ambrose had had. His late change of mind about contemporary miracles, I shall argue, is likely to have taken place when he visited the north African town of Uzalis in 424 and was confronted with their profuse happenings at the city's recently constituted shrine of Stephen. Therefore I have inserted at this point, as Chapter 5, Uzalis's *The Miracles of the First Martyr Stephen*, written shortly after 424 and the oldest surviving prose text about miracles at a western shrine. Chapter 6 thereafter returns to Augustine and examines his changing treatment of the martyrs in his sermons about them and his mostly brief descriptions, in 426, of their new miracles.

In Chapter 7 we seem to see a decisive change of approach to religious truth. In contrast to the poet Juvencus's earlier emphasis on verbal precepts, and Ambrose's and Augustine's in essence still logocentric presentations of the faith, the otherwise unknown poet Sedulius's poetic rendering of the Gospels in the period 425/50 aims at a non-verbal, imagistic entrance to it through the reader's affective transformational experience of each miracle as a whole: each is now presented to the meditative reader or listener as a model of one of the faith's core 'mysteries'. The last chapter, finally, looks at how, around 460 in Roman Gaul, Paulinus of Périgueux refigured and elaborately imaged Sulpicius's 'bare' stories of Saint Martin's miracles and added new ones to present the Gospel's 'mysteries' in contemporary dress, while at the same time responding to the needs of a society without an adequately functioning central government and in imminent danger of foreign military occupation.

MODERN VIEWS AND THE EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION ABOUT MIRACLES

Does the imagination perceive aspects of the works of God to which human reason and understanding are blind?¹

In almost all religions, certain kinds of events have been perceived as ‘miraculous’; interpretations of them differ according to the presuppositions of their cultural ambience.² In those recognized as ‘miracles’ in the late antique period too, presuppositions determined whether the event was seen to be simply a coincidence or a curiosity with no particular significance, or understood as a sign pointing to a divine agent or message. In situations of conflict, moreover, another distinction could apply: that between an officially sanctioned way of seeking a miracle and a deviant one — in other words, between ‘religion’ and ‘magic’. Modern scholars now tend to agree that this distinction is a matter of social perception and that

I am grateful to Karl F. Morrison for his advice on an earlier version of this Introduction.

¹ Zachman, ‘Meaning of Biblical Miracles’, p. 16.

² As in Woodward, *The Book of Miracles*. Mullin, *Miracles and the Modern Religious Imagination*, discusses early modern and modern European thought on miracles in general. There is no book-length comprehensive overview of ‘miracle’. The most recent and fullest accounts I could find are multi-authored encyclopedic articles ‘Wunder’ (*TRE*); ‘Wunder’ (*RGG*); ‘Miracles (in the Bible)’ and ‘Miracles (theology of)’ (*NCE*); and ‘Wunder’ (*LTK*). Further useful overviews are Waida, ‘Miracles: An Overview’, and Kelsey, ‘Miracles: Modern Perspectives’. On the tradition of healing miracles, see Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity*, and Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*.

some kind of symbolic and/or 'manipulative' ritual is inherent in all religions.³ 'Miracle', then, is also a sociological phenomenon.⁴

To provide a smoother passage into the late antique source material I shall first situate my approach to the concept of miracle in the range of the modern views on the subject, with their antecedents, and then provide an overview of the early Christian tradition about miracles up to the late fourth century.

'Divination or Poetry'? Present-day Views of Miracle

From the sixth to the eleventh century, miracles were plentiful in stories about saints and shrines that supported the edificatory or propagandistic purposes of the author, but they were not the object of formal theology. From the late eleventh century on, the new heresies' rejection of relics and of the cult of saints combined with the Aristotelian learning that then began to become available to the west to produce some reflection on the notion of miracle.⁵ An eleventh-century treatise *On the Wonders of the Holy Scripture* tried to explain them as much as possible rationally, and Guibert of Nogent (1053/54–1124) attacked faked relics and miracles as manifestations of clerical greed.⁶ The early scholastic writer Hugh of St Victor (1096–1141) also de-emphasized the fantastic claims of sainthood and miracles to point, as Augustine had done, to the miraculousness of the Creation itself.

After the early thirteenth-century reception of Aristotle's writings, Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–74) tried to establish a rational foundation for the Christian belief in miracles and formulated the notions that would dominate the discussion in the Catholic Church up to the present time. He stated that true miracles are those performed by the power of God to confirm the truth of the Catholic faith or to demonstrate someone's sanctity. Significantly, compared to what we will see to have been Augustine's view, Thomas 'preferred to view the miracle not as an acceleration of nature, but rather as the suspension of nature's normal processes'.⁷

³ On this, see Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity'.

⁴ Waida, 'Miracles: An Overview', p. 6049.

⁵ This and the following are from Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders*, pp. 15–28, and Hardon, 'Concept of Miracle'.

⁶ Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders*, pp. 15–16.

⁷ Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders*, p. 21. Justice, 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in their Miracles?', argues that the Thomistic view of miracle as necessarily contrary to reason in combination with stories of utterly improbable events must have made belief in miracles in certain cases (nearly)

His contemporary Albertus Magnus (d. 1280) added the distinction between *miracula* and *mirabilia*, extraordinary phenomena which could be explained as natural processes. Nevertheless, records show that while ‘skepticism and miracle continued to exist side by side in Christian sources, [...] the miracle was considered the most effective way of overcoming doubts’.⁸ In the eighteenth century, whereas the philosopher David Hume (1711–76) totally rejected the possibility of miracle, Pope Benedict XIV (1740–58) wrote a massive treatise on miracles that Catholic opinion today regards as ‘the best authoritative treatment on the subject in Catholic theology’.⁹ Based upon Thomas’s definition, it expands the notion of miracle to ‘preternatural’ effects by angelic powers, in cooperation with human beings, to testify to someone’s sanctity.¹⁰ An adequate notion of miracle, it was now agreed, would need to involve not only the transcendence of nature but also a religious purpose.¹¹ Absence of the latter, for instance in the case of acts by what were regarded as evil spirits, would disqualify a phenomenon as a miracle. In the late nineteenth century, the foundation by Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) of what she called Christian Science deserves mention; it quickly acquired many adherents, could show its effectiveness in many unexpected cures, and is still doing so today.¹² Wholly inspired by Bible study, it posits the material dimension as only a projection of mind, itself linked to a larger spiritual reality, and the invocation of ‘Christ-power’ as able to address physical malfunctioning as a misunderstanding of true reality. It is a view which later appeared to receive some support from the new twentieth-century science that (through instruments and calculations) sees only energy in motion instead of ‘matter’.

For the scientific revolution of the early twentieth century in fact abandoned the concept of an encompassing materialist determinism. This determinism had previously forced people to regard the phenomenon of ‘miracle’, according to one’s presuppositions, either as an event impossible to human effort and therefore

impossible for many, and that ordeals tended to be social mechanisms in which everyone more or less consciously agreed to play the game.

⁸ Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders*, p. 119.

⁹ Hardon, ‘Concept of Miracle’, p. 234.

¹⁰ Hardon, ‘Concept of Miracle’, pp. 235–38.

¹¹ Hardon, ‘Concept of Miracle’, pp. 241–42.

¹² See Peel, *Health and Medicine in the Christian Science Tradition*, esp. pp. 99–115 on its spiritual healing today.

necessarily a direct divine intervention,¹³ or conversely as an event that would ultimately be explainable by science. With the new probabilistic view of 'nature' and its not always exactly determinable ways of functioning, the whole concept of 'miracle' became questionable. Recent scientific research has moreover acknowledged the influence, through a still unknown medium, of the observer's emotions upon the technical registration of exterior events. And it has also recognized the acausal and unpredictable occurrence of clusters of analogous formal patterns, apparently deriving from a creative cosmic 'Ground' which is knowable to human beings only by indirect means.¹⁴ All this means that today much of general, scientific, and theological opinion regards the relation between so-called paranormal events — such as telepathy, psychokinesis, and healing through guided mental imagery — and those which religion identifies as the meaningful action of a creative energy known as 'God' as an open question.¹⁵ This is also my position.

Jung, however, recognized a phenomenon similar to the acausally patterned clusters noticed in physics in what he called 'synchronistic' events: causally unrelated visible events formally resembling each other that somehow occur in meaningful clusters around a person who is emotionally attuned to recognize them. Accordingly, Jung also called them 'psychophysical' events.¹⁶ They include extraordinary phenomena that also occur in miracle stories, such as telepathy, meaningful coincidence, and the effects of prayer. Summarizing Jung's thought on the matter, Jolande Jacobi (1890–1973) writes about this phenomenon that he regarded it as a manifestation of the touching or overlapping of consciousness with the (universal) contents of the unconscious sphere during a state of diminished attention to sensory experience.¹⁷ We shall see that our sources similarly appear to describe miracles as happening in a state of mind in which the boundaries between self and world become fluid.

¹³ This has been and still is the official view of the Catholic Church according to Hardon, 'Concept of Miracle'.

¹⁴ As in Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. Werner Heisenberg said similarly: 'What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning' (cited in Ader, 'Historical Perspectives on Psychoneuroimmunology', p. 17).

¹⁵ For instance Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science*. There is scepticism too in Pyysiäinen, *Magic, Miracles and Religion*. Contemporary theological opinion on this point includes Kleine, 'Wunder I. Religionsgeschichtlich: 1. Vorbermerkung'; and Ritter, 'Wunder VIII'.

¹⁶ Jung, *Synchronicity*, p. 99. Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, pp. 289–93, applies this concept to medieval miracles.

¹⁷ Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, pp. 62–63.

Modern theological views of miracle differ, however. Roman Catholic theologians continue to stress the historicity of at least the New Testament miracles as divine interventions — if perhaps not exactly in the way recorded there — of a different, spiritual, kind of reality in a ‘corporeal nature’ that, notwithstanding twentieth-century scientific discoveries, cannot be understood to have accomplished these so-called ‘supernatural’ events by itself. According to these theologians, such events manifest the working of the divine Originator of the Christian religion, the same agent being recognized in present-day miracles which have been authenticated by the Roman Church’s official investigators as causes for beatification or sanctification.¹⁸ One Christian physician, after taking the ongoing discoveries of the new (medical) science into account, still sees ‘miracles’, and this is because his definition of a miraculous healing is one which combines its being regarded by the present state of medical science as impossible with its occurrence after a prayer to Christ by the patient him/herself or by others.¹⁹

In the later twentieth century, Eugen Drewermann (b. 1940), a Roman Catholic priest and theologian who is also a psychotherapist, has incorporated Jung’s psychological insights into his view of miracles. Recognizing the historicity as well as the sign-value of biblical miracles, he understands psychic and physical healing as taking place, also today, through a shamanic-type strategy of healing through the imagination; this would address energy patterns innate in man’s spiritual nature — similar to those which Augustine assumed — which he too regards as the Creator’s pathways to communicate with and heal mankind.²⁰

Protestant theology about miracles developed differently. In the earlier twentieth century, the Lutheran theologian Rudolph Bultmann (1884–1976) tried to make sense of the biblical miracle stories by treating them as culture-conditioned metaphors or ‘myths’ which could be decoded and understood to point to the perennial question of an individual’s existential self-understanding.²¹ His fellow Lutheran theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) considered ‘myth’ too philosophical a concept for the Bible’s creation narratives and miracle accounts. Preferring the term ‘saga’, he defined it as the representation of an affective dimension in human

¹⁸ Sant and Collins, ‘Miracles (in the Bible)’, and Pater, ‘Miracles (theology of)’.

¹⁹ On this, see Gardner, *Healing Miracles*; Olivieri, *Y a-t-il encore des miracles à Lourdes?*; and Paciorkowski, *Guérisons paranormales dans le christianisme contemporain*.

²⁰ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 74–140.

²¹ Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, p. 6; cited by Zachman, ‘Meaning of Biblical Miracles’, pp. 13–14.

experience: 'an intuitive and poetic picture' of 'the historical self-revelation of God'.²² This revelation, he held, can be recognized and transmitted through the human faculty of imagination, for

the human possibility of knowing is not exhausted by the ability to perceive and comprehend. Imagination, too, belongs no less legitimately in its way to the human possibility of knowing. [...] In principle each of us is capable of divination or poetry, or at least capable of receiving their products.²³

Miracle stories, then, would be metaphors of interior experience.

The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revalorization of imagination and its potentialities may in part be responsible for the present revived popular and scientific interest in the phenomenon of miracle.²⁴ From the 1970s on, with the development of insight into the influences of emotion and imagination upon the body, some Protestant theologians again began to regard Jesus's healings, resuscitations, and exorcisms as 'historical', interpreting them to have been releases from 'psycho-somatic' or hysterical conditions.²⁵ The surge of all kinds of healings in contemporary charismatic movements shows, however, that this is perhaps not the full picture. The most recent theology that takes into account the new mind-body medicine,²⁶ as well as the holistic, probabilistic science, regards science and spiritual awareness simply as different approaches to the same multilevelled dynamic 'reality'. It holds that whereas paranormal phenomena are coolly observed, 'miracles' are experienced when there is an additional affective experience of 'grace', which cannot be proven or disproven by science and which finds verbal expression in imagistic language.²⁷ In this view, affect and imagination are the only faculties through which the specific phenomenon of 'miracle' can be experienced and communicated.

'Divination or poetry', then, may in fact be a more direct approach to the essence and experience of 'psycho-physical events', some of which have been regarded as 'miracles', than Barth realized. The Episcopalian priest, scholar, and healer

²² Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III. 1, 81 and 90; quoted by Zachman, 'Meaning of Biblical Miracles', pp. 14–15.

²³ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III. 1, 91; quoted by Zachman, 'Meaning of Biblical Miracles', p. 15.

²⁴ Ritter, 'Wunder VIII', col. 1729.

²⁵ Alkier, 'Wunder III', col. 1722. Similarly Kollmann, 'Wunder IV', p. 392.

²⁶ A pioneering publication in this is Cousins, *Head First*.

²⁷ As Wiedenhofer, 'Wunder III. Systematisch-theologisch', col. 1318.

Morton T. Kelsey (1917–2001), who has written extensively about the Christian charisms or spiritual powers, also tends to base his psychological insights on those of Jung. He remarks, significantly for the investigation undertaken in this book, that theorizing about the ontology of miracles through deductive reasoning from a priori doctrines does not yield new knowledge, and that ‘words can have a connection with reality only when they are used to represent images which have that connection’.²⁸ Presumably, he means the images and symbols about which Jung wrote that arise from the unconscious, dream sphere or correspond to those.

The designation of an event as a ‘miracle’, however, also indicates that an attitude of ‘wonder’ is involved in its perception.²⁹ Augustine had pointed to the distinction between ‘wonder’ as an attitude of puzzled curiosity at an extraordinary event and that of an astonished admiration of an unusual event which is perfectly understood to be a sign of God’s well-known patterns of activity.³⁰ In his view, the whole self-renewing Creation is in fact miraculous, although humanity has become so accustomed to its processes that their miraculousness is no longer noticed.³¹

The English word ‘miracle’ (Latin: *miraculum*) indeed derives from the Latin verb ‘to wonder’ (*mirari*). The Vulgate New Testament most often designates a miracle as a visible ‘sign’ (Latin: *signum*) of God’s intentions with humanity,³² but also with a Latin designation that is frequent in some of the sources we shall be looking at: as *virtus*, ‘a deed of power’; it points to a miracle as also a perception or experience of an invisible but purposeful energy.³³ Whereas the term *miraculum* appears only ten times in the Vulgate Old Testament and not at all in the Vulgate New Testament, from the time of Augustine it came into common use³⁴ —

²⁸ Kelsey, *Encounter With God*, p. 132.

²⁹ As also Augustine of Hippo (Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis), *De utilitate credendi* [hereafter *De util. cred.*], XVI. 34, CSEL, 25, pp. 1–48 (p. 43, lines 16–17): ‘miraculum voco quidquid arduum est aut insolitum, supra spem vel facultatem mirantis adparet’. In all Latin transcriptions I have changed consonant u’s into v’s and, unless otherwise indicated, the translations are my own.

³⁰ As in Augustine, *Epist.*, 120. 5, CSEL, 34. 2, p. 708, lines 17–22.

³¹ Augustine, *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium* [hereafter *Tract.*], XXIV. 1, lines 1–6, 7–25, CCSL, 36, p. 244.

³² Hofius, ‘Semeion’.

³³ Betz, ‘Dynamis’.

³⁴ Alkier, ‘Wunder IV’, col. 1723. On the terminology, see ‘Miracle, Wonder, Sign’. Further, in the Old Testament, Fabry, ‘Wunder II’, col. 1717; in the New Testament, Alkier, ‘Wunder III’, col. 1719; also Thiel, ‘Wunder II’, p. 383, and Kollmann, ‘Wunder IV’, p. 389.

together with the return of the phenomenon itself. At its most dramatic, the sense of wonder — frequently referred to in the New Testament³⁵ — opens the mind to an awareness of a different, powerful dimension operating with a dynamic different from that in common-sense experience, corresponding to that in the psychic or spiritual sphere referred to by Jung as part of the unconscious.³⁶ Barth points to the sense of wonder (*Verwunderung*) experienced at the breakthrough of divine revelation as ‘die gesunde Würzel der Theologie’ (the healthy root of theology).³⁷ Not only that, he regards what he calls ‘die Logik des Wunders’ (the logic of miracle) as the fundament of theology’s content.³⁸ As the title of this book shows, I tend to be sympathetic to this view without, however, subscribing to any specific theological propositions. In the late antique period, as I hope to show, after what had been a long period of great reserve towards visible miracles, this attitude of trusting wonder and the access it gives to imaginal dynamics appears to have been rediscovered and reintegrated into Christian discourse and everyday experience.

‘The Earnest Prayer of a Righteous Man Has Great Power’: Early Christian Views of Miracle

In pagan Antiquity as well as in the biblical lifeworld, there was no concept of a completely autonomous ‘nature’ that could function by its own laws alone; events and phenomena that seemed extraordinary were assumed to be effected by various kinds of spiritual forces interacting with physical regularities. Thus stories of extraordinary natural events or marvels were uncritically believed and avidly collected by pagans.³⁹ Personally performed miracles occur in stories about wise or ‘divine’ men such as the philosopher Pythagoras (sixth century BC) and the travelling sage-miracleworker Apollonius of Tyana (first century AD); alongside cures, the latter is described as having performed a plethora of natural feats, not surprisingly interpreted by some of his contemporaries as magic.⁴⁰ Among philosophers, one of the most prominent and widespread assumptions was that of ‘cosmic sympathies’

³⁵ See Mundle, ‘Thauma’.

³⁶ Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, p. 62.

³⁷ Barth, *Einführung in die evangelische Theologie*, p. 54.

³⁸ Barth, *Einführung in die evangelische Theologie*, p. 55.

³⁹ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, pp. 50, 58, 62–64.

⁴⁰ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, pp. 62, 75–76, and 74–75 respectively. See Bowie, ‘Apollonius of Tyana’.

which, together with demons, were held to be involved in many kinds of extraordinary natural events as well as in personally performed miracles and magic.⁴¹ In daily life, there were frequent visions and auditions of the gods in their shrines, and ills and afflictions were cured during sleep in the shrines of Asclepius, one of the most successful healing cults in the period from the fifth century BC until the end of Antiquity and a main rival to Christianity.⁴² While Romans such as Cicero (106–43 BC) were influenced by the scepticism of Greek philosophy, a historian such as Tacitus (c. 55–c. 120 AD), although sceptical, relates a few miracles which he regards as authentic. His colleague Suetonius (c. 69–c. 125 AD), however — continuing a Roman tradition of miracles in the service of the state which was later continued by the Christian Church⁴³ — tells about many marvels around the emperors.⁴⁴

From the first century BC on, through the influence of Platonists, and later the Neoplatonists, spiritual knowledge came to be regarded as absolutely superior to that acquired through the senses.⁴⁵ As we saw earlier, in the writings of the early fourth-century Neoplatonist Iamblichus knowledge, and even the presence, of the divine is sought through a trance-like enactment of symbols and rituals which were regarded as participating in the different powers and deities.⁴⁶ At a more popular level, all kinds of magical practices proliferated, and even the fourth-century pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus ‘was very fond of extravagant wonder stories’.⁴⁷ In Roman law, however, harmful magic was punishable by death.⁴⁸ Apollonius’s third-century biographer tells us that after he had been acquitted in court of being a magician (rather than a god, as he himself claimed), Apollonius proved his divinity by disappearing into thin air.⁴⁹

⁴¹ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, pp. 9–10. A very full account of ancient magic is that of Hopfner, ‘*Mageia*’, cols 311–15, specifically about ‘sympathies’.

⁴² See Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, pp. 102–67, and Herzog, ‘Asklepios’.

⁴³ Ruggini, ‘Il miracolo nella cultura del tardo impero’, pp. 164–66. Cracco Ruggini gives an extensive overview of the role of miracles for groups and individuals, pagan and Christian, from the third to the sixth century.

⁴⁴ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, p. 40.

⁴⁶ On Iamblichus and his thought, see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*.

⁴⁷ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, p. 216.

⁴⁸ Hopfner, ‘*Mageia*’, cols 384–87.

⁴⁹ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, VIII. 5. 3–4, ed. and trans. by Jones, II, 320–23.

In the Jewish-Christian tradition, however, as Marc van Uytenghe shows, the phenomenon of miracle as a 'sign', especially of sanctity, had been problematic from biblical times onwards.⁵⁰ In the Old Testament, God was the Lord of nature and governed every process and event in his creation. For its theocentric view, miracle as a contravention of nature did not exist because there was no autonomous nature; and extraordinary events were understood to be divine 'signs' of help, pleasure or displeasure, or punishment. Until the time of the prophets, God's power tended to be manifested through natural wonders which were understood to impress his chosen people with the validity of his word.⁵¹ In the book of Exodus, however, God also works through Moses, who performs many miracles and defeats the magicians before Pharaoh in order to free the Hebrews from their slavery in Egypt.⁵² The miracles continue under his successors. In the later stories about the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the first two books of Kings, God is increasingly seen to work through personally performed miracles that authenticate his prophets. (Stories of similar events, however, can be found in pagan sources.⁵³) Although Moses, Elijah, and Elisha were recognized as healing through God's power, the reality of miracles precipitated by magic or nefarious powers was not denied. Because of this, the later books of the prophets do not mention visible miracles and regard the justice and goodness of God as the one true miracle.⁵⁴

A vast literature about the miracles of the New Testament offers various interpretations of its miracles as such and of their different roles in the individual Gospels, in Acts, and in the Epistles.⁵⁵ According to Morton Kelsey, Jesus's miracles fall into six categories: healing, exorcism, communication with the spiritual world, nature miracles, clairvoyance, and resurrection appearances.⁵⁶ Modern science, he continues, has registered four categories of paranormal psychic phenomena:

⁵⁰ This and the following from van Uytenghe, 'Controverse biblique et patristique autour du miracle'. Cf. Angenendt, 'The Miracle'; older but still useful are Lampe, 'Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic', and Wiles, 'Miracles in the Early Church'.

⁵¹ Weimar, 'Wunder II. Biblisch-theologisch: 1. Alten Testament', col. 1312.

⁵² Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, pp. 157–60.

⁵³ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, pp. 164–65.

⁵⁴ Fabry, 'Wunder II'; and Thiel, 'Wunder II'.

⁵⁵ An overview of the literature may be found in Kollmann, 'Wunder IV', pp. 395–97. I have found useful Howard, *Disease and Healing in the New Testament*; older but still informative are Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*; Wilkinson, *Health and Healing*; and Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*.

⁵⁶ Kelsey, 'Miracles: Modern Perspectives', p. 6057.

extrasensory perception, psychokinesis, experiences of the deceased, and out-of-body experiences; the issue of their relation to the New Testament and other Christian miracles remains for him an open question.⁵⁷

As for the Gospels, the first three most commonly used the term 'deed of power' (*dynamis*; Latin: *virtus*) for Christ's miracles; the fourth Gospel speaks of 'signs' (*semeia*; Latin: *signa*), stressing their symbolic meaning.⁵⁸ Believers regarded Christ's miracles as authenticating his messianic mission, and Christ is recorded as transmitting the power to perform them to his disciples as well as to all those who believe in him (Matthew 10. 1, 7–8, Mark 9. 37–40 and 16. 17–18, and Luke 9. 49–50, respectively). The latter is especially clear in Christ's saying in John 14. 12–13: 'whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do, for I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.' Many stories show that Christ regarded faith as a central precondition for a person to be healed; thus he was unable to perform miracles in his home town of Nazareth, where people could perceive him only as Joseph the carpenter's son. He stresses, however, that his message is more important than any 'signs' that might accompany it and complains about those who believe only if they see miracles, cautioning too against pride in their performers (John 4. 48 and Luke 10. 20, respectively). His enemies, on the other hand, either disbelieved his miracles or attributed his power to demonic forces (Matthew 12. 24). Although resemblances to certain magical practices can indeed be discerned in his miracles,⁵⁹ he has been judged today to be better described as a messianic prophet.⁶⁰ For he himself was conscious of their ambiguous and controversial nature, speaking of false prophets and christs also performing miracles, and rejecting healers whose lives did not conform to his teachings.⁶¹ All these themes continue in later Christian writings.

Mark's Gospel, the oldest one, although relating many miracles, also has reservations about them as such and foregrounds the greater importance of the

⁵⁷ Kelsey, 'Miracles: Modern Perspectives', pp. 6057–58. A particularly eloquent defence of Christian miracles is Lewis, *Miracles*. Differing views of paranormal healing are presented in Resch, *Paranormale Heilung*.

⁵⁸ Kertelge, 'Wunder II. Biblisch-theologisch: 2. Neues Testament', col. 1313.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, esp. pp. 140–52, regards the oldest traces of traditions about Jesus as pointing to him as a 'magician'; later revisions adapted it.

⁶⁰ Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', pp. 1526–39.

⁶¹ Matthew 24. 24 and 7. 23, respectively. See Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*.

understanding of Jesus's Messiahship. Matthew presents them as fulfilments of Old Testament prophecies that point towards the formation of the Christian Church. While these two evangelists privilege Christ's verbal teachings, Luke makes his miracles the fundament of belief. The later Gospel of John, written around 120 AD, enlarges the importance of the miracles even more; he presents the seven which he relates as central symbols of the doctrine of salvation.⁶² Thus while many of Jesus's cures and miracles resemble those of contemporary pagan 'divine men', what makes them unique is their eschatological context: they invite faith by pointing to the beginning realization of God's Kingdom.⁶³ Significantly, this notion, indicating enthusiasm and expectancy, will reappear in the reports of the new miracles in our fourth- and fifth-century sources. From Acts and the Epistles it is clear that the apostles continued Jesus's miracles and moved in a scattered community that practised various spiritual powers.⁶⁴ It has been suggested that what also helped the Church to grow in this period was that, in contrast to the payments expected from those healed in the temples of Asclepius, Christian cures were free.⁶⁵

The apostolic Church had expanded rapidly because of its religious enthusiasm which included not only miracles that imitated those of Christ but also healing through objects that had been in contact with the apostle Paul, such as his apron or handkerchiefs (Acts 19. 12); these cures became the models for the later miracles through contact associated with the martyr cult. Whereas the disciples are mentioned as having sometimes used oil in an unspecified way in their healing miracles (Mark 6. 13), the letter of James gave a new specific procedure for divine healing that now involves the Church elders:

Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will heal the sick man and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins he will be forgiven. Confess your sins to each other therefore, and pray for each other that you may be healed, for the earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power.⁶⁶

⁶² Kollmann, 'Wunder IV', pp. 394–95.

⁶³ Kollmann, 'Wunder IV', p. 393. See also Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, pp. 168, 165–72, especially pp. 169–70. Other prophets too in this period tried to duplicate certain feats of the Old Testament prophets (Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, p. 166).

⁶⁴ Mentioned in I Corinthians 12. 27–31.

⁶⁵ Kollmann, 'Wunder IV', p. 394.

⁶⁶ James 5. 14–16. The Bible quotations are from the Vulgate and the translations are my own. The verbs used — *salvabit* and *salvemini* — refer to health but can also connote salvation.

Although there are no clear references to anointing the sick after the New Testament, it probably continued to be a regular practice, for there are prayers for the blessing of oil for use with the sick in later Church orders and indications that this could also have been carried out by lay persons.⁶⁷ At the same time, because Christian miracles could be confused with the acts of pagan 'divine men', magicians, and charlatans, the apostle Paul had cautioned against tying the Christian message too closely to charismatic gifts, insisting that love was greater than these and that the greatest miracle was Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 12. 31 and 13. 13, and 1 Corinthians 1. 22–25, respectively).

In the second and third centuries, after the religious excitement of the apostolic times had faded, a literary competition began with pagan wonders. Christian apocryphal gospels and apostolic romances' describing quasi-magical invented miracles as proofs of their divine power discredited the phenomenon; it led to an ongoing difference of opinion between Christians and pagans about which spiritual entities were involved in a particular miracle, about what was in fact happening, and about its purpose.⁶⁸ Consequently, miracles became a suspect phenomenon.⁶⁹ The Church authorities, seeing this, became very reserved about the authenticity of actual visible miracles and emphasized interior spiritual ones instead. Although there is some evidence of a quiet continuance of healing in private homes,⁷⁰ the Church authorities' eventual view, then, that visible Christian miracles had ceased after apostolic times can be understood as, at least in part, a desire to avoid a confusing and very unedifying contest with pagan miracles.⁷¹ The surviving evidence of Christian and pagan magical prayers and amulets shows, however, that reciprocal contamination of views and practices was not uncommon.⁷²

In their polemic against heretics and pagans, Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 208), Tertullian (c. 155–c. 220), and Origen mention contemporary miracles in a general

⁶⁷ Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, p. 241.

⁶⁸ See Miller, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, pp. 142–43; van Uytenghe, 'Controverse biblique et patristique autour du miracle', p. 209; Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle*, esp. p. 125 on exaggeration in the apocryphal romances; and Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, pp. 124–26. On the apocrypha, see Rüger and Wilson, 'Apokryphen'.

⁶⁹ Cf. Klauck, *Religious Context of Early Christianity*, p. 170.

⁷⁰ Evidence in Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*. An older but still useful overview is that of Frost, *Christian Healing*. Cf. Ferngren and Amundsen, 'Healing and Medicine: Healing and Medicine in Christianity'.

⁷¹ As Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle*.

⁷² *Ancient Christian Magic*, ed. by Meyer and Smith.

way as still happening in their own community and categorize those of non-Christians as demonic. The compliment was returned.⁷³ Thus the third-century pagan writer Celsus noted that a natural state of affairs might be mistaken as a miracle and that in any case Christian miracles were not unique because they resembled pagan ones. Christian writers, however, claimed that the difference between magic and Christian miracle was the moral life of the performer and the faith involved; moreover, the miracles of the Messiah had to be true ones because, unlike the pagan ones, they had been foretold in the Old Testament.⁷⁴ The Church Fathers' views on their nature, however, could differ. Thus while the western Tertullian — known for his view that the absurd can only be true⁷⁵ — insisted upon the concrete historicity of all the Gospel miracles, the Alexandrian exegete Origen — who, as we saw, popularized the allegorical approach to biblical texts — tended to view them as spiritual events described in sensory terms, perhaps to reach the understanding of ordinary folk.⁷⁶ He also distinguished between 'marvels', extraordinary natural events without any particular meaning, and 'signs', events that need not be extraordinary but were perceived as pointing to a message from God.⁷⁷ Here, the context would be crucial. After Tertullian and Origen there were no new views of miracle and no common standard of their credibility until Augustine,⁷⁸ whose thoughts on the matter will be examined in later chapters. Although there are general references here and there indicating that home healings might be taking place among Christians, as far as I know there is no extant description of a specific miraculous cure after the apostolic writings until the fourth century.⁷⁹

Origen, however, had already referred to the decrease of Christian prophecy and healing miracles in his time. And from the second half of the third century on, opinions began to be divided even among Christians themselves about the occurrence as well as about the desirability of contemporary miracles, because a taste for the marvellous could divert attention from spiritual values. Accordingly, Christian writers tended to emphasize spiritual transformation as the real contemporary

⁷³ Ohst, 'Wunder V', p. 398. On Irenaeus, see Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, pp. 89–135.

⁷⁴ For instance in Isaiah 35. 3, 5–6.

⁷⁵ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, p. 194.

⁷⁶ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, pp. 193–96, 198–208.

⁷⁷ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, p. 206.

⁷⁸ Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, p. 209.

⁷⁹ Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, p. 125.

miracle, a theme that continued to resonate thereafter.⁸⁰ There is some evidence, nevertheless, that spiritual gifts, including those of healing, continued in Syria.⁸¹ In the late third century, Victorinus of Pettau (d. 304) opined that the grace once granted to work miracles had now been replaced by another one. In his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* he wrote: 'The apostles [...] overcame unbelief by powers, signs, portents, and mighty works. After them, the solace of interpreting the prophetic writings was given to the churches, already confirmed in the faith.'⁸² The cessation of contemporary miracles is thus taken for granted, and the new kind of grace regarded as furthering spiritual transformations, while new visible miracles are awaited just before Christ's Second Coming. We will see that some of the authors to be discussed, significantly, refer to this expectation as about to be realized soon. By the early fourth century, the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265–c. 340) regards the time of miracles as past: they had been necessary only as a means to conversion when the Church needed to be established; the Greek Church Fathers, at first, were of the same opinion. An exceptional person, however, might be naturally inclined to become a conduit for its spiritual energies. Thus, in the third century, Bishop Gregory of Neocaesarea (c. 213–c. 270), also called 'the wonderworker',⁸³ had been such a person. In the west, the first one we hear about is Martin of Tours.

In 330, the year that the now Christian Emperor Constantine founded his new capital in the east, Constantinople, a contemporary of Eusebius, the early fourth-century Spanish poet Juvencus, did a very bold thing: he produced a decorated poetic synthesis of the Gospels in Latin.⁸⁴ Directed at the new Christian elite

⁸⁰ Van Uytanghe, 'Controverse biblique et patristique autour du miracle', p. 210.

⁸¹ Parmentier, 'Charismatisch leven in de vroegchristelijke kerk', p. 4.

⁸² Victorinus of Pettau (Victorinus Pettaviensis), *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, x. 2, CSEL, 49, p. 90, lines 11–14: 'Apostoli enim virtutibus signis portentis magnalibus factis vicerunt incredulitatem. Post illos iam fide confirmatis ecclesiis datum solatium prophetarum scripturarum interpretandarum'; cited in van Uytanghe, 'Controverse biblique et patristique autour du miracle', p. 210. Jerome's edition of the second sentence of this passage (*Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, x. 2, CSEL, 49, p. 91, lines 13–15) reads: 'Post illos, iam eisdem consummatis, ecclesiis datum est solatium prophetarum scripturarum interpretandarum' (After them, the [number of?] [miracles] having already been completed, the solace of interpreting the prophetic writings was given to the churches).

⁸³ See Crouzel, 'Gregor I (Gregor der Wundertäter)'.

⁸⁴ Gaius Vettius Aquileius Juvencus, *Evangeliorum libri quattuor* [hereafter *Evang.*], CSEL, 24. See *Restauration und Erneuerung*, ed. by Herzog and Schmidt, pp. 331–36.

around the imperial court, it presented the Christian message in a language in which educated believers, raised on Virgil, could delight. Almost all the Gospels' most important stories, parables, and doctrinal statements are told as they appear there, but now aestheticized with poetic images. Christ is praised throughout with epithets of divine power, but also with conspicuous light imagery, such as *doctor lucis* (doctor of light) and *dominus lucis* (Lord of light).⁸⁵ Everything spiritual, in fact, is presented as light — thus the poet speaks of *fidei [...] lu[x]* (the light of faith).⁸⁶ But this is the only explicit symbolism in the text; other symbolic dimensions — perhaps implicit — are not alluded to.⁸⁷

Considering the centrality of the poem's light imagery, it surprises that Juvenecus describes only one of the Gospels' several cures of blindness and, most surprising of all, that he does not mention John's story of the cure of the man born blind (John 9), there intended to illustrate Jesus's description of himself as the Light of the world. Here is the poem's only story of a cure of blindness:

suddenly there was a shouting of two blind men walking shakily together towards him. Christ said to these: 'What do your hearts believe? That the light you lost will be given back through my power?' They said that they believed with a firm heart. Then Christ said: 'Since you believe, see the light! And after this tell no one our name.' But because of the seeing men's so great joy, their irrepressible ardour soon spread the report of the cure to everyone.⁸⁸

Contrary to the Gospel's recording that Jesus also touched their eyes, here the words alone effect the cure. And it looks as though Juvenecus is intentionally avoiding symbolism: the emphasis here is upon Christ's power, not — as in the Gospel — upon his being the Light of the world, something to which, as we saw, the poet frequently points elsewhere in the poem.

As for Christ's preaching, Juvenecus tends to cluster the doctrinal explanations, scattered in the Gospels, into long continuous sections: despite the poetic

⁸⁵ Juvenecus, *Evang.*, III, lines 109 and IV, lines 655, 806, CSEL, 24, pp. 83, 139, and 146 respectively. On this theme, see Röttger, *Studien zur Lichtmotivik bei Juvenecus*, and Fontaine, 'Dominus lucis'.

⁸⁶ Juvenecus, *Evang.*, I, CSEL, 24, p. 24, line 418.

⁸⁷ See on this Green, 'The *Evangeliorum Libri* of Juvenecus'.

⁸⁸ Juvenecus, *Evang.*, II, CSEL, 24, p. 60, lines 408–16: 'Clamor se protinus offert | Caecorum pariter gressu labente duorum. | Ollis Christus ait: "Quid credunt pectora vestra? | Num virtute mea se reddet lumen ademptum?" | Olli firmato se credere corde fatentur. | Tum Christus fatur: "Credentes cernite lucem | Nec cuiquam nostrum post haec edicite nomen." | Dixit ; sed propere per gaudia tanta videntum | Ardor inexpletus famam per cuncta serebat.' Cf. Matthew 9. 27.

presentation, his focus is upon the life-saving verbal doctrine. And at the end of the poem he defends his enterprise by saying, again rather boldly: 'the grace of Christ shines so greatly in me that the glory of the divine law willingly takes on the earthly ornaments of language through our verses'.⁸⁹ 'Divine law', or precepts, then, is what the poet is attempting to communicate. Christ's miracles, as he says a number of times, authenticate his mission and add weight to his message: they were then necessary to convert unbelievers.⁹⁰ The implication here is that the true believer now does not or should not need them. For many in the west, this attitude would change dramatically by the end of the century.

Perceiving the Cessation of Miracles: Preceding Developments

As we saw, pagans worshipped divinized heroes like Asclepius as healers. But the Christians, too, had their heroes. The deacon Stephen, stoned to death by the Jews on account of his Christian preaching (Acts 6. 8–7. 60), is regarded as the first martyr or witness to the faith. He was followed by many other Christians who braved the empire's proscription of their religion. During the episodic state persecutions, they refused to sacrifice to the state gods or to the emperor when ordered to do so to show their loyalty; presented as having felt no pain while being tortured, they were made to die various horrible kinds of death in front of a crowd, all the while exhibiting only ecstatic joy at their imminent meeting with Christ in Paradise.⁹¹ Their remains were, when possible, carefully tended to by those who remained behind; from the time of Polycarp of Smyrna's martyrdom in 156, the anniversary of their deaths could also be collectively remembered. During the persecutions the veneration of the martyrs' remains spread, but their liturgical remembrance began only in the third century.⁹²

After 313, the Emperor Constantine's recognition of Christianity put an end to the state's persecutions, the state gradually became Christian, and the

⁸⁹ Juvencus, *Evang.*, IV, CSEL, 24, pp. 145–46, lines 803–05: 'in tantum lucet mihi gratia Christi. | Versibus ut nostris divinae gloria legis | Ornamenta libens caperet terrestria linguae'.

⁹⁰ Most forcefully in Juvencus, *Evang.*, II, lines 668–69, and IV, line 389, CSEL, 24, pp. 71–72, 128 respectively.

⁹¹ Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*; Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, pp. 419–92; and Boyarin, *Dying for God*. See also Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, pp. 72–85, on mystic possession.

⁹² Chiovard, 'Relics', pp. 50–51. Cf. Volp, *Tod und Ritual*.

competition with pagan miracles, presumably, less. Christian miracles could then begin to return, or to become visible, in a more trusted environment of what, especially in the eastern part of the empire, was a more homogeneous Christian community. Beginning there, a new religious élan appeared that combined many ancient pagan practices with the Christian world view into a new and very powerful movement: the martyr cult.⁹³ Pagans and Christians shared the older concept of martyrdom and the beliefs and practices associated with death and burial. The custom of travelling to sites associated with holy power to pray for healing, however, was a pagan custom; praying to the dead in the name of a deity occurs in some pre-Christian Greek and Roman funerary inscriptions and papyri.⁹⁴ It has been noted that what slowly brought it all together to grow into the Christian martyr cult was 'a number of conceptual shifts that took place within the second to fourth centuries'.⁹⁵ In this period, martyrdom slowly came to be regarded as 'an ecstatic privilege' and a sacrifice of love;⁹⁶ furthermore, the dead body gradually lost the traditional pagan and Jewish stigma of ritual pollution: the power of the martyrs' remains that came to be recognized to exorcize demons was regarded as the proof of their purity. Simultaneously, in the east, the partition and translation of their bodies began.⁹⁷ For their earthly bodies were now spiritually assimilated to their glorious resurrected ones in heaven, and this has been identified as the first foundation of the later cult of relics.⁹⁸ The rise within the Church of the concept of 'holy places' that accompanied the cult of relics was a departure from the previous non-localized and personal concept of Christian holiness; from the early fourth century on, increasingly large chapels or churches were now beginning to be built over the martyrs' graves and relics.⁹⁹ The upcoming martyr cult is thus likely to have absorbed much of the religious energies and expectations of the earlier pagan healing and hero cults.

⁹³ On this development, see now Pietri, 'L'Évolution du culte des saints aux premiers siècles chrétiens'. See also Parmentier, 'Non-medical Ways of Healing in Eastern Christendom'.

⁹⁴ Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 12–13.

⁹⁵ Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 14.

⁹⁶ Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 14, citing various places in Boyarin, *Dying for God*.

⁹⁷ Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 15–16, citing various places in Volp, *Tod und Ritual*, pp. 247–63.

⁹⁸ Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, p. 109.

⁹⁹ Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 17–19; see Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 139–42.

Two other crucial conceptual shifts need to be added to this. One that does not seem to have a pagan precedent is the notion, appearing in the later fourth-century writings of Basil of Caesarea (329–79) and Hilary of Poitiers, who had spent time in exile in Asia Minor, that the material remains or relics of the martyrs are themselves conduits of divine power.¹⁰⁰ The other shift is its corollary, the recognition and acceptance of a new transformational experience and paradigm: the contemporary *Christian* miracle.

Starting and developing most quickly and extensively in the eastern part of the empire, the martyr cult began to invoke the martyrs as intercessors in praying for healing from Christ.¹⁰¹ In the Latin west, Pope Damasus (366–84) was the first to stimulate the veneration of Rome's martyrs programmatically, at least as intercessors at the Last Judgement, by finding and restoring their dilapidated tombs and composing laudatory epitaphs for them.¹⁰² In this same period, however, a western writer known to posterity as Ambrosiaster could still note the absence of miracles in his own time, asking

And why does such a thing not happen now: that men have the grace of God? It was fitting that it happened at the beginning, so that the fundamentals of the faith should become strong. Now, however, it is not necessary, for the [Christian] people itself leads other people to faith when they see its good works and its simple preaching.¹⁰³

Miracles, then, were still considered as something of an exhibition; interior spiritual values were supposed to be primary.

In the years that followed, as Peter Brown describes it, the popes nevertheless succeeded in presenting themselves as the interlocutors of the martyrs as intercessors in heaven and in gaining the patronage of lay benefactors to support and finance their cult.¹⁰⁴ Brown regards this cult as a development from ancient roots in the care for the dead, but also sees it as a religious phenomenon paralleling and

¹⁰⁰ Delehaye, *Origines du culte des martyrs*, p. 116. Cf. Geffcken, *Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism*, p. 290.

¹⁰¹ Delehaye, *Origines du culte des martyrs*, pp. 100–40. See also Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, p. 106.

¹⁰² Damasus papa, *Carmina*, PL, 13; see Delehaye, *Origines du culte des martyrs*, pp. 71–72; Guyon, 'Damase et l'illustration des martyrs', esp. pp. 172, 175 on aid asked for.

¹⁰³ Ambrosiaster, *In epistolas ad Corinthios*, I. 12. 31. 2, CSEL, 81. 2, p. 144, lines 15–19: 'Quare nunc non ita fit, ut habeant homines gratiam dei? Inter initia fieri oportuit, ut fundamenta fidei acciperent firmitatem. nunc autem non opus est quia populus populum adducit ad fidem, cum videntur eorum bona opera et praedicatio simplex.'

¹⁰⁴ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 35–36.

reflecting the sharp rise of social and political patronage in the empire after Constantine: the martyrs were now presented and needed as heavenly patrons with, in the west, bishops acting as their mouthpieces.¹⁰⁵ Their intercession and forgiveness at the future Judgement would have seemed more desirable as the personal sense of sin grew stronger, exacerbated through what will be seen to be the new contemporary practice of ascetism and soul-searching. The saintly martyr became an exemplar of the perfect spiritual state, and as will be seen in some cases, what was experienced as his intimate personal care and support made him into something like a higher self.¹⁰⁶

As for the new miracles, Brown connects what he calls 'the geyserlike force' with which the belief in miracles of healing arose at the shrines with what he calls 'the imaginative dialectic' of the martyr's triumphant overcoming of death.¹⁰⁷ As certain of Gregory of Tours's stories in the sixth century seem to indicate, Brown writes, when the passions were read in church, and 'potent fantasies of dismemberment' and subsequent re-creation in Paradise were imaginatively re-enacted by a listener, this 'emotional inversion' could trigger a congruent overcoming of the illness and a healing renewal in the subject.¹⁰⁸ The recognition of miraculous healing as precipitated through the internalization of transformational symbols is a capital insight. Raymond Van Dam later expanded and refined this anthropological approach in his illuminating chapter on bodily miracles as enacting individual and social solutions in the sixth century.¹⁰⁹ In what follows I shall also make grateful use of anthropological and psychological insights and suggest that these experiences involve a non-common-sense state of mind. For, as we saw, the martyrs' passions describe them as having transformed their consciousness to such a degree that, presumably in a state of trance, they felt no pain from the tortures they underwent and only exhilaration at the prospect of soon being with Christ in Paradise; although the term was not used, that itself was a miracle. Brown and Van Dam do not say this explicitly, but they seem to indicate that the listener's experience of

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 36–44.

¹⁰⁶ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 50–68.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 71, 75–77.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 80–85.

¹⁰⁹ Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, pp. 82–115. A number of my own articles about sixth-century sources also present imaginative models of cures: 'History and Miracle'; 'Word, Image and Experience in the Early Medieval Miracle Story'; 'Fatherly and Motherly Curing in Sixth-Century Gaul'; 'Poetics of Wonder'; and 'Text, Symbol and "Oral Culture" in the Sixth-Century Church'. All these are reprinted in my *Word, Image and Experience*.

blocking out and inverting the images of torture into joy is likely also to have precipitated a state of mind in which common-sense consciousness is left behind for another quality of awareness. In this mode, the contemplation of Christian symbols had changed the martyrs' consciousness of their bodies, and this same change might take place again in another body.

As indicated in the prologue, healing in this imagistic or dream mode of awareness through the internalization and enactment of transformational symbols is recognized and described by modern cultural anthropology.¹¹⁰ In the chapters that follow I shall attempt to show that the new or greatly intensified awareness of this affective-spiritual dimension which religious enthusiasm appears to have rediscovered in the fourth century — one that is accessed and activated through affective stimuli such as images rather than through words and concepts — is likely to have been the one in which miraculous cures tended to occur. Although there is no surviving written record of any specific miracle in the west prior to 386, Ambrose's sermon will be seen to indicate that Italian cities, imitating those in the east, had meanwhile in one way or another begun to venerate their own martyrs and, he suggests, to attribute miracles to them. It looks as though the promise and expectation of grace, healing, and protection through a visible and palpable presence of dusty remains that could be visualized as an approachable human being made the more abstract picture of salvation by a very distant and majestic Christ easier to accept and internalize. Now that the Church was no longer a persecuted sect that needed the extraordinary and cathartic inspiration of a physical sacrifice for Christ to survive, the memory of these loving martyrs became the transforming image of a new catharsis and inspiration for the truly Christian life.

Exceptional persons, however, might be naturally inclined to access this dimension on their own and become a conduit for its spiritual energies. At the Council of Constantinople in 381, which discussed the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Bishop Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–95) asked his superbly educated and eloquent colleagues — significantly all convinced that the gifts of the Holy Spirit had ceased after apostolic times — why their oratory did not convince more people; for at that very same time the cures of uneducated visiting Mesopotamian healers showed that this Holy Spirit was still at work in their contemporaries.¹¹¹ These healers had left their

¹¹⁰ As in Devisch, *Weaving the Threads of Life*. Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair*, passim, describes, and shows in photos between pp. 90 and 91, devotees of Sri Lankan gods, in trance-state, fire-walking and torturing themselves to please them.

¹¹¹ Parmentier, *Spiritus donorum*, pp. 17–18, nn. 24, 25.

own country and their families and looked only to heaven; their demeanour was the opposite of that of the bishops:

they [...] are in certain sense exiles from human life, stand above the vicissitudes of nature, touch upon this life only inasmuch is strictly necessary; for the most part they walk on high with incorporeal powers; they look like old men with solemn countenance, shining with grey hair; their mouths are secured because they have learnt not to dispute. But they have such a great authority against spirits that they realize what they have in mind by a simple command and the demons withdraw, not by the art of logical conclusions but by the authority of faith, not by irrefutable arguments but because they are cast into outer darkness. This is the way in which the Christian is able to argue, these are the achievements of our faith. Why then are we not convinced: when there is an exceeding grace of healing, when the teaching of the Word abounds? 'All these [gifts] are effected by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills' [1 Corinthians 12. 11]. Why do not those who are saved multiply? No one should think that I consider the present grace as insignificant!¹¹²

What we see here is that the charismatic gifts which, as the book of Acts shows, were widespread in the enthusiasm of the earliest — uneducated — Christians, are now experienced as no longer easily available to those with an elaborate education and living in a world with complicated institutions, and that it takes specialists who have left all this behind to access those powers.

'The Working Evidence of Faith': The First, Eastern, Miracles

The more or less illiterate hermits and monks who, from the early fourth century, had begun to withdraw from what they regarded as a collective departure from apostolic values in order to live a severely ascetic life in deserted places in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria were such specialists; although the surrounding country people might wish otherwise, they are presented as focused upon their own spiritual life, not upon miracles.¹¹³ Tending to avoid human contact as much as possible, they performed a miracle only reluctantly in cases of extraordinary need or when severely pressed upon. The reason for this was the avoidance of spiritual pride, an argument that, as will be seen, John Cassian would later also adduce in his early fifth-century digest of eastern monastic experience for the west.

¹¹² Gregory of Nyssa (Gregorius Nyssenus), *In suam ordinationem*, PG, 46, col. 550C–D, trans. by Parmentier, 'The Book of Steps on Magic'.

¹¹³ On the rise and development of this movement, see Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*.

Whereas the descriptions of the eastern martyrs' miracles are likely to have travelled to the west with particles of their relics, the often more extravagant, folkloristic ones which eventually nevertheless began to be reported of the ascetics living in the desert and recorded by their visitors were at first orally transmitted and from the later fourth century on preserved and circulated in a number of literary reports. As will be indicated in the following chapters, the miracles described in these reports significantly helped to shape western notions about the phenomenon.¹¹⁴ Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria's Greek *Life of Anthony* appears to have been the first full written report; we learn from Augustine, who read it in a Latin translation before 386, that it greatly stimulated enthusiasm in the west for the Christian ascetic life.¹¹⁵ What the example of this extraordinary, but also unlearned if not actually illiterate,¹¹⁶ man also transmitted, however, was an image of how God's power could work miracles through such a life. Anthony was compared with the prophet Elijah, living with a pure heart constantly in the sight of God, who sustained him through phantasmagoric onslaughts of the Devil.¹¹⁷ Jesus appeared to him as a light, promising to help him always.¹¹⁸ Serpents flee at the sight of him and demons are afraid of him; significantly, all this is given a place in the Christian world view through psalm quotations that seem to foretell such experiences.¹¹⁹ Several visions of the Devil are described, and Anthony knows what is happening at a distance.¹²⁰ But Athanasius also warns his possibly also monastic readers against performing miracles because these might lead to spiritual pride.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ For an overview of the extant literature about these so-called Desert Fathers, see Louth, 'Literature of the Monastic Movement'.

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *Confessiones* [hereafter *Conf.*], VIII. 6. 14, lines 33–36, CCSL, 27, p. 122. Athanasius of Alexandria (Athanasius Alexandrinus), *Vita sancti Antonii abbatis, interprete Evagrius presbytero Antiocheno* [hereafter *Vita Antonii*], PL, 73, cols 125–70.

¹¹⁶ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, I, PL, 73, col. 127A; XLIII, col. 158A; XLV, col. 158C.

¹¹⁷ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, VI, PL, 73, cols. 131B and 131D–132C, respectively.

¹¹⁸ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, IX, PL, 73, col. 132D.

¹¹⁹ Respectively Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XI and XII, PL, 73, col. 133C and D; Psalms 67 (68) and 117 (118) (all Bible quotations will mention the Vulgate reference first); Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XII, PL, 73, col. 134A.

¹²⁰ Respectively Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XVI, PL, 73, col. 138B–D; XXXVIII, cols 155D–156B; XVII, col. 141C.

¹²¹ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XIX, PL, 73, cols 143D–144A: 'Admoneo, ut vitae magis sit vobis, quam signorum sollicitudo. Nullus ex vobis haec faciens, aut ipse superbia intumescat, aut despiciat eos qui facere non possunt. [...] Unde his qui non in vitae laboribus sed in prodigiis exsultabunt,

The request for miracles came from the people, because they believed that a holy man's prayers would have more effect than their own. We see, too, that the pagan habit of sleeping in a sanctuary to be healed by a nightly visit of a god is transferred to the monastery where Anthony was then temporarily living.¹²² Later, residing in his mountain, he had a vision of the monk Ammonis's soul being received by angels in heaven.¹²³ On a journey, Anthony once reached the opposite side of the river without getting wet and under pressure confessed to having been lifted up in the air; on a boat trip, he recognized the presence of an invisible demon in someone by its fetid smell and promptly exorcized it.¹²⁴ He also foreknew who would visit him and when, foresaw his own ascent to heaven upon death, and publicly denounced Arian theology (that Christ was not co-equal with God) as well as — significantly — 'affirmed that it was the last heresy and precursor of the Antichrist'.¹²⁵ Is this sentence also in part responsible for the view which will be seen recurring in the west, prominent especially in Martin and always connected with the occurrence of the new miracles, that the end of the present world was now more imminent? Christian millennialism — the notion that the end of the world would be preceded by a thousand-year reign of the saints — had flourished here and there during the time of the persecutions, notably in Victorinus of Pettau; it had tended to disappear, however, in the Church's triumphalism of the fourth century — Eusebius and Jerome rejected it.¹²⁶ It looks as though many of the new ideas about miracles emerged in the combination of the eastern contemplative experts with country folk who were insufficiently provided with medical help and, perceiving the monks as resembling former pagan 'divine men', expected to receive similar benefits from them.

Athanasius himself was a learned theologian, but — like Gregory of Nyssa's (later) contrasting the illiterate but effective Mesopotamian healers with the word-

dicentibus "[...] non novi vos, discedite a me, operarii iniquitatis]" ('I warn you that your [holy] living should be more important to you than the concern to perform signs. [...] Hence to those who exult not in the labours of [holy] living but in wonders will be said: "[...] I never knew you, depart from me you evildoers]'). Cf. Matthew 7. 23.

¹²² See on the pagan custom, for instance, Klauck, *Religious Context of Early Christianity*, pp. 154–68. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XXIV, PL, 73, col. 148A–B.

¹²³ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XXXII, PL, 73, col. 153B.

¹²⁴ Respectively Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XXXII, PL, 73, col. 153D; XXXV, col. 154D.

¹²⁵ Respectively Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XXXIV, PL, 73, col. 154C; XXXVII, col. 155A–D; and XLI, col. 157B: 'ultimam hanc esse haeresim et praecursorem Antichristi affirmans'.

¹²⁶ Revelation 20. 1–6. On this, see Lössl, "Apocalypse? No".

centred, contentious, and therefore unpersuasive Greek bishops — he describes the miracle-performing power of Anthony's illiterate wisdom as trumping that of philosophers who came to try him out. Thus he describes these persons as men who were similarly 'blinded by the cloud of their secular learning and esteemed as most learned in the universal studies of philosophy and of its arts'.¹²⁷ They tried to elicit verbal arguments from Anthony to prove the Christian faith. Anthony was at first silent and sorry for them in their wrong kind of thinking. Then he gave them a long sermon, rendered into Greek by an interpreter, that showed them the ridiculous and obscene immorality of the fables about their Greek gods.¹²⁸ This was followed by a question of how the cognition of God is best achieved: 'through a mass of words, or through the working evidence of faith?'.¹²⁹ They answered that this working was stronger than words, 'for the working evidence that comes about through faith generates feelings in the soul, whereas opposition begins with the dialectical disputation because of the artifice of its components'.¹³⁰ In the end, when he invited the philosophers to exorcize the demons from several possessed persons who had been waiting in the wings, as it were, and they could not do this, he invoked Jesus's name, made the sign of the Cross over their faces, and 'together with the expelled demons, the empty wisdom of the philosophers who were present was overcome'.¹³¹ All this points to the conscious setting-aside of verbal learning as well as everyday common sense as unable to apprehend the higher spiritual wisdom, which is also the reality of miracles.

Jerome, himself dedicated to the monastic life, was thereafter moved to write the life story of the first hermit Paul, preceding Anthony, as well as of two other ascetics, and others later published *Lives* or collections of stories from and about the hermits and monks they had visited.¹³² Jerome's account of the mid-third-century erudite Paul of Thebes as the very first hermit is very different from that

¹²⁷ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XLVI, PL, 73, col. 158D: 'omni saecularis prudentiae nube caecati, atque universis philosophiae studiis artium suarum aestimatione doctissimi'.

¹²⁸ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XLVI–XLVII, PL, 73, cols 158D–160C.

¹²⁹ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XLVIII, PL, 73, col. 160C: 'per collectionem verborum, an per operationem fidei?'.
¹³⁰ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XLVIII, PL, 73, cols 160C–D: 'Quia operationem, quae ex fide descendit, animi generat affectus, dialectica vero disputatione ex artificio componentium sumpsit oppositionis exordium'.

¹³¹ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, XXXIX, PL, 73, col. 161D: 'una cum expulsis daemonibus vana praesentium philosophorum confutata sapientia est'.

¹³² See Louth, 'Literature of the Monastic Movement'.

of Athanasius about Anthony.¹³³ It presents him as having entered upon his solitary, self-sufficient life at the age of sixteen to elude a brother-in-law planning to give him up to be persecuted by the state so as to receive a financial reward, and then liking it so much that poverty and withdrawal became his choice.¹³⁴ Paul did not do any miracles but met some strange creatures associated with paganism in the desert — a hippocentaur (half man, half horse) and a satyr or faun (goat-like dwarf), who both addressed him; he also engages with a wolf, and a raven brings him bread. That and his way of life resembles that of Elijah as described in I Kings 17. 4–6. The story ends with Anthony finding him and burying him, helped by two lions. It is a romantic account, appealing primarily to a taste for exotic and inexplicable phenomena.

The up to then unfamiliar phenomena and events in the stories about Anthony and his fellow monks — as, earlier, Christ's and the apostles' miracles — now became models of divine action. For variations of these were from then on reported as reappearing or happening again in the lives of other saints. While some of this repetition is likely to have been motivated by the authors' admiring imitation, committed in order to fulfil the reader's expectation of an ideal model, it seems equally probable that people's perception and experience of their own and others' lives and actions were actually coming to be shaped by hearing or reading about the exciting new events.¹³⁵

Along with all these images around the new miracles, the notion of the superiority of non-discursive wisdom of the heart, experienced and manifested through miracles, appears gradually to have effected a crucial change of emphasis in the perception of religious truth in the late fourth- and early fifth-century west. As Anthony indicated it was, of course, a strand of thinking going back to the apostle Paul's dicta 'For the wisdom of this world is folly with God', 'the foolishness of

¹³³ Jerome (Hieronymus Stridonensis), *Vita sancti Pauli primi eremitaie*, PL, 23.

¹³⁴ See Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*, pp. 133–35.

¹³⁵ On miracles in late antique Gaul, see Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*; in the sixth-century world of Gregory of Tours: de Nie, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower*. On miracles in the Middle Ages, see *Miracles, prodiges et merveilles au Moyen Âge*, ed. by Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l'Enseignement supérieur Public. *Miracle et karāma*, ed. by Aigle, compares Christian and Islamic miracles in their respective hagiographical traditions; *Mirakel im Mittelalter*, ed. by Heinzelmänn and others, covers various angles; Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders*, studies the development of the concept as it appears in various mostly thirteenth-century sources influencing the canonization processes; Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, analyses later medieval miracles through modern insights.

God is wiser than men', and 'the Kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power' (1 Corinthians 3. 19, 1. 25, and 4. 20, respectively). Gregory of Nyssa had noticed, however, that it had somehow been forgotten or overlooked by the now very much educated spokesmen of the Church. The events at the new shrines and Anthony's impressive story were wake-up calls to return to the original attitudes and experiences of the uneducated fishermen who had been Jesus's first disciples.



Figure 1. 'Saint Ambrose', mosaic, Milan, Sacello di San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio. Fifth century. Photo courtesy of Scala/Art Resource NY.

‘THE MIRACLES OF ANCIENT TIMES ARE RENEWED’:
ENTHUSIASM, DOUBT, AND RESISTANCE
AROUND THE YEAR 400

As we saw, although scattered general references implying the continuance or possibility of faith healing in the home occur in various kinds of sources after the apostolic period, the notion that contemporary miraculous cures had in fact ceased since then had been expressed by Christian writers since the third century.¹ Augustine presents this view when he writes in the period 387–91:

since the Catholic Church is [now] spread out and well established throughout the world, those miracles [of the New Testament] are not permitted to continue into our times, lest the soul should ever seek visible things, and lest their customary happening should cause the human race to grow cold [in faith].²

Surprisingly, however, this was *after* he had learned about the miracle in Milan in the summer of 386, which will be discussed below. This event brought contemporary miracles, possibly already happening elsewhere in the west but not well known, to the attention of a wider public. As the story of his conversion shows, Augustine then also knew that contemporary miracles were happening in the east through his having read Athanasius’s *Life of Anthony*.³ It was only in 426, however, overwhelmed by

¹ Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*; Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*, pp. 3–6.

² Augustine, *De vera religione* [hereafter *Vera relig.*], XXV. 47, lines 27–31, CCSL, 32, pp. 216–17: ‘Cum enim ecclesia catholica per totum orbem diffusa atque fundata sit, nec miracula illa in nostra tempora durare permissa sunt, ne animus semper visibilia quaereret, et eorum consuetudine frigeresceret genus humanum.’ On this and the following, see de Vooght, ‘Miracles’, p. 6 (quotation and date).

³ Augustine, *Conf.*, VIII. 6. 14, lines 33–36, CCSL, 27, p. 122.

the tidal wave of miracles in the two years since the arrival of the first martyr Stephen's relics in his own city of Hippo, that he finally fully recognized in writing the occurrence of contemporary miracles also in Africa and gave brief summaries of some of the ones he knew about in his monumental *City of God*.⁴ His well-documented initial decision to look past what was happening and his equally well-documented later acceptance make visible a transformation of perception that must also have occurred for others in this period.

As will be seen, although some were at once enthusiastic, Augustine was not the only one who was not immediately impressed by the event in Milan. The earliest briefer western reactions and references to the new phenomenon will be analysed in their chronological order. First, Ambrose's own words will be examined about what to many appeared as the game-changing event in the west: his finding and placing of the martyrs' relics with their visible miraculous power at the centre of his church community; he read Greek, had contacts with the east, and appears to be responsible for importing to the west not only the eastern practice of hymn singing but also some of the new ideas and practices there concerning the martyrs.

Leaving Augustine's initial reserve and eventual change of mind to a later separate full treatment, the earliest briefer testimonies will then be considered. Doubt and puzzlement is evident in a late fourth-century letter which has been attributed to a Gallic priest named Eutropius; it refers specifically to the events in Milan as relatively recent and replies to other Christians' questions about the new developments. At the same time, however, a very enthusiastic defence and elaborate explanation of the new miracles is found in the sermon which Bishop Victricius of Rouen delivered in 396 to a community, ostensibly not yet well acquainted with the new phenomenon, to welcome the relics which Ambrose had sent to him. Paralleling Victricius's sermon, Bishop Gaudentius of Brescia's welcome, also at this time, of the relics he had brought with him from the east will be briefly looked at; his extant sermons describe the martyrs' relics more simply as intimate personal companions during his travels. By contrast, Bishop Maximus of Turin's contemporaneous sermons about the martyrs to what looks like a recently constituted Christian community, still covertly observing pagan practices, point not only to doubts but even to lack of interest in what the martyrs might do for them.

Miracles are appreciated but not central in the poetic passions of the martyrs written by the Spanish Prudentius (348–c. 405) in the early fifth century; instead of emphasizing their possible present benefactions, these invite the reader's empathetic participation in the details of their heroic suffering as a dynamic stimulus

⁴ Augustine, *De civitate dei* [hereafter *Civ. dei*], XXII. 8, CCSL, 48, pp. 815–27.

towards spiritual purification. The newly intensified Christian hero worship and its newfangled practices were not viewed positively by all serious Christians, however. An early fifth-century writer in south-western Gaul named Vigilantius, who appears to have enjoyed some support in his region, protested vehemently against what he regarded as the intrusion of pagan ideas and practices in the veneration of martyrs' relics and the expectation of their miracles. His letters or treatises have not survived, but his charges will be analysed as they are presented and rebutted in a vigorous reply by the learned Jerome in 406 — the very year that the Germanic federations crossed the Rhine unopposed into Gaul and began their gradual occupation and absorption of the western Roman Empire.

A few decades later, an influential writer in the monastic tradition, John Cassian (c. 360–435), presented a reflective view of miracles performed by living persons — then evidently sometimes occurring in ascetic circles — and counselled their avoidance on account of the danger of spiritual pride. As will be seen in the next chapter, an equally reserved attitude then appears to have reigned in the city of Tours, where the saintly monk-bishop Martin's enemies took over after his death and would remain in power for many years. At the moment that the empire began to crumble in the west, then, while the authenticity of Christ's past miracles was fully accepted, the status of contemporary miracles could still be highly controversial. In the years and centuries that followed, however, expectations and experiences of miracle came to be prominent and taken for granted in much of the surviving literature.⁵ What we see happening in the glimpses presented in this volume is the genesis of that mentality and tradition.

'Defenders I Need': Ambrose's Appropriation of the Martyr Cult and his View of Miracles

In the east, the martyr's shrine developed independently of the Church hierarchy, but in the west, it was the bishops who eventually built their power and organized their community around it.⁶ Their model was Ambrose of Milan's act in June 386.⁷ Son of a praetorian prefect of Gaul, Ambrose was himself provincial governor of

⁵ Van Uytenghe, 'Controverse biblique et patristique autour du miracle', p. 205, speaks of the 'fonction primordiale du miracle' in the civilization of the early Middle Ages.

⁶ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 9–11.

⁷ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 39.

northern Italy at the time of his election as bishop in 374.⁸ His secretary Paulinus, who knew him only in his last years, wrote his biography about fifteen years after his death at the behest of Augustine; because it is conceived as a holy man's life and heightens what might be understood as divine action at every point, his version of events needs to be consulted with caution.⁹ Neil McLynn, Ambrose's modern biographer, describes the Bishop more dispassionately as not only a prolific ecclesiastical writer and inspiring preacher, but also an extremely agile diplomat, an astute tactician, a consummate orator, and a brilliant and daring manipulator. Ambrose used the extraordinary combination of these qualities gradually to build up full control over the Milanese church community against a party, led by the Empress Justina and the imperial court, then residing there, that adhered to a different, and in Ambrose's view heretical, view of the Christian faith: the so-called Arianism that denied Christ's equal divinity with the Father.¹⁰ McLynn's description of how Ambrose carried out this process, and eventually clinched it by outwitting everyone, also through what in fact was the appropriation of the already existing but inconspicuous martyr cult in the city, reads like a political thriller. There are moves, countermanoeuvres, subterfuges, obfuscations, bluster, inventions, wrongfootings, and demagoguery. His opponents even, quite literally, charged the Bishop with 'enchantment' of the people through his hymns,¹¹ invented upon the spot, but imitating an eastern custom. Responding to this accusation, Ambrose later wrote, somewhat facetiously: 'Hymnorum quoque meorum carminibus deceptum populum ferunt, plane non hoc abnuo' (They also say that I deceived the people with the songs/incantations of my hymns; obviously, I do not deny this).¹² The hymns were to keep his community's spirits up while (according to McLynn)

⁸ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 1–3. Moorhead, *Ambrose*, p. 1; the latter study also elucidates Ambrose's moves through his writings.

⁹ The edition used is Paulinus of Milan (Paulinus Mediolanensis), *Vita Ambrosii*, ed. by Bastiaensen, trans. by Canali and Carena, III, 52–125 (text and trans.), 281–338 (notes and comments). On Paulinus, see Moorhead, *Ambrose*, pp. 9–12. Caution is advised by Lamirande, *Paulin de Milan et la Vita Ambrosii*, p. 24. Régerat, 'Un nouveau modèle de sainteté', suggests that it was the first Christian life celebrating the pastoral and prophetic activities of a bishop who was neither a martyr nor a monk as a new type of saintliness.

¹⁰ It began as the view of the Alexandrian priest Arius; see Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, pp. 94–100.

¹¹ Moorhead, *Ambrose*, p. 143.

¹² Ambrose of Milan (Ambrosius Mediolanensis), *Sermo contra Auxentium* (Epist. 75a (21a)), CSEL, 82. 3, p. 105, lines 422–23, 34.

he made them believe that they were being besieged in their church by imperial troops who, according to his biographer Paulinus, were merely standing guard to prevent a possible riot.¹³ It shows that a presumably completely sincere belief in divine action was not necessarily a dreamy-eyed thing but could be combined with superlatively sophisticated political and managerial skills.¹⁴ Seventy-odd years later, as will be seen, a Bishop of Tours would attempt to build up his power against imminent danger by similarly spreading the knowledge of the miracles of the city's patron saint Martin.

The perception and hinge role of miracle in the events of June 386 as they are described in Ambrose's letter to his sister in Rome will first be examined.¹⁵ It will be followed by a brief look at how his biographer presents him fifteen years after his death. Ernst Dassmann, however, has pointed to the fact that, although Ambrose regarded the martyrs as models for Christian behaviour, he was himself less enthusiastic about miracles than his contemporary Paulinus of Nola and than his biographer (at a later date) and that, contrary to them and to his eastern colleagues, he left no (extant) sermons praising individual martyrs.¹⁶ Notwithstanding the fact, then, that the Bishop at one crucial point made the healing and prospective defensive miracles of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius the centre of his presentation to his embattled community, his personal approach to them was reserved. A perusal of what he says about miracles in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke will show this. There he is seen using the allegorical interpretation of Scriptural texts that became dominant in the west from the latter part of the fourth century, in no small part through the influence of his own writings.¹⁷

The conflict with the imperial court had been about their perceived right to celebrate their version of the Christian faith in one of Milan's churches. The Bishop — while also apparently revelling in the fact that he might be physically threatened and even martyred¹⁸ — had prevented this in every way he could think of, thereby asserting his version of Christian doctrine and his sole control of the

¹³ On this last event, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 200–01; Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XIII. 1–2, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 70, reports that the troops, sent to besiege, changed their minds, converted, and defended the church instead.

¹⁴ This had first been noted by Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 36–37.

¹⁵ Contained in Ambrose, *Epist.* 77 (Maur. 22), CSEL, 82. 3, pp. 126–40.

¹⁶ Dassmann, 'Ambrosius und die Märtyrer'; den Boeft, 'Milaan 386', agrees.

¹⁷ See on this Auerbach, 'Figura'.

¹⁸ Moorhead, *Ambrose*, pp. 134–37.

city's ecclesiastical establishment. In the early summer of 386, after a recent series of standoffs that had still not resolved the issue, he prepared to dedicate a large church, then already called the Basilica Ambrosiana, which he had been having built in the western suburbs, next to a chapel of the martyr Victor, in which his brother had been buried.¹⁹ Ambrose's bold and unprecedented plan was to be buried beneath its altar, thinking it proper to rest where he had offered the sacrifice; McLynn surmises it that it would have been a ready-made martyr's shrine should the Bishop indeed have been martyred as he seemed to wish.²⁰ In a letter to his sister, Ambrose tells her that he was urged by his community to dedicate the church by installing relics in it: 'many, as it were with one mouth, began to address me, and said "Consecrate this as you did the Roman basilica"'.²¹ This church, dedicated to the apostles, housed a collection of imported relics; it is not clear whether the new request to consecrate the Bishop's own church was spontaneous or the result of a subtle prompt, something which the Bishop seems to have managed more frequently.²²

His answer must have surprised many; Ambrose writes: 'And I answered: "I shall do it if I find relics of the martyrs." And at once I felt as though the heat of a certain presentiment.'²³ He does not specify further; his contemporary biographer Paulinus of Milan later reports that the martyrs 'revelaverunt' (revealed) themselves to the Bishop.²⁴ On 17 June, perhaps the morning after, Ambrose took his clergy and, evidently, a number of his church's dependents who were possessed, to the shrine of the martyrs Nabor and Felix, earlier imported from Lodi.²⁵ His letter continues:

The Lord gave us grace: I ordered the frightened clerks to clear away the earth in the area in front of the chancel screen before [the tombs of] the saints Felix and Nabor. [And] I found the fitting signs, for having brought those upon whom hands were to be laid by us [in exorcism], the holy martyrs began to show themselves to such a degree that — while I

¹⁹ On this and the following, see Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XIV–XVI, ed. by Bastiaensen, pp. 70–74; McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 209–19; and Moorhead, *Ambrose*, pp. 150–54.

²⁰ Moorhead, *Ambrose*, p. 152; McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 209–11.

²¹ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 1, lines 5–7, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 127: 'multi tanquam uno ore interpellare coeperunt dicentes: "Sicut Romanam basilicam dedices".'

²² McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 211.

²³ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 1, lines 7–8, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 127: 'Respondi: "Faciam, si martyrum reliquias invenero." Statimque subiit veluti cuiusdam ardor praesagii.'

²⁴ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XIV. 1, lines 1–2, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 70.

²⁵ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 211.

had not yet said anything — one vessel [a woman] was seized [by a demon] and thrown prostrate at the place of the holy tomb. [Then] we found two wondrously tall men, just as [the tradition of] olden times reports: a complete skeleton and much blood.²⁶

Ambrose presents these facts as though everyone is already familiar with the phenomenon of the possessed being exorcized — in fact, purified — through the presence of the martyrs through their relics, and that this is a 'fitting sign' indicating that the relics are indeed those of true martyrs. He must have known that this was then an established eastern practice; as far as I know there is no earlier evidence that it was known at that time in the west.²⁷ Augustine later reports — upon hearsay — that the demons addressed Gervasius and Protasius (as well as Ambrose himself) by name.²⁸ Together with what Ambrose later mentions as the reports of old men having seen these names on tombstones, this is how the skeletons were 'identified' as those of the martyrs.²⁹ But the presence of 'blood' too was evidently deemed essential as an indication of martyrdom. This is of course a question of conditioned perception, about which more will be said later. One scholar has hypothesized that there may have been some basis in fact in that prehistoric graves have been discovered from Spain to Russia, and even in South America and the Pacific islands, to contain skeletons painted with ochre, presumably as the colour of 'life'.³⁰ Since dusk was already falling, the relics were temporarily placed in another church for the night and there, while vigils were being celebrated the whole night, some received the laying on of hands — an indication that the healing of the possessed continued. The following day, the bodies were carried in procession to the new church and he reports: 'dum transferimus, caecus sanatus est'

²⁶ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 2, lines 10–18, CSEL, 82. 3, pp. 127–28: 'Dominus gratiam dedit; formidantibus etiam clericis iussi eruderari terram eo loci, qui est ante cancellos sanctorum Felicis atque Naboris. Inveni signa convenientia: adhibitis etiam quibus per nos manus imponenda foret, sic sancti martyres eminere coeperunt; ut adhuc nobis silentibus, arriperetur urna, et sterneretur prona ad locum sancti sepulcri. Invenimus mirae magnitudinis viros duos, ut prisca aetas ferebat. Ossa omnia integra, sanguinis plurimum.'

²⁷ See on this Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, pp. 145–46. On the practice of the ancient tradition of exorcism as adapted and continued by the Church, see Thraede, 'Exorcismus'.

²⁸ Augustine, *De cura*, XVII. 21, CSEL, 41, p. 657, lines 6–10.

²⁹ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 12, lines 126–28, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 134; see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 212.

³⁰ Reinach, *Orpheus*, pp. 111–12, quoted in Dudden, *Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, I, 306–07.

(while we were bringing them there, a blind man was healed).³¹ This public event was crucial. For, as we shall see, Ambrose's opponents would cast doubt upon the authenticity of the exorcisms of the possessed. This cure, authenticated by many witnesses, was more difficult to controvert as a sign of the presence of true martyrs in these remains. In his subsequent sermon to the crowd present at the translation ceremony Ambrose, comparing it to the cure of the man born blind in the Gospel of John's ninth chapter, also treats it as a figure of spiritual blindness,³² emphatically referring to the opening of everyone's eyes to the up till then hidden presence of the martyrs.

His letter continues with what looks like a verbatim account of this very revealing sermon. First, probably referring to the texts read in the liturgy, he explains that the martyrs themselves and their deeds are the equivalent of 'the heavens declare the glory of God', and that the Lord dwelling on high and regarding the low (Psalms 18. 2 (19. 1) and 112. 5–6 (113. 5–6), respectively) shows himself in his revealing the relics to his Church. Protasius and Gervasius, long unknown, are now brought forth, and they cause the church of Milan, up to then without local martyrs, to rejoice as the mother of several sons in the distinctions and examples of her own sufferings.³³

Then he describes what he presents as the larger phenomenon of the cult of the martyrs in his time — perhaps thinking about the contemporary eastern practices:

For not without reason do many call this the resurrection of the martyrs: if not for themselves, for us certainly the martyrs have risen. You know — you have yourselves even seen — many cleansed from evil spirits, and very many also, when they touch the robe of the saints with their hands, freed from those ailments which oppressed them. You see *the miracles of ancient times renewed* now that through the coming of the Lord Jesus a greater grace has poured into the earth, and you see that many are healed through a certain shadow of the holy bodies. How many handkerchiefs are thrown [upon them]! How many pieces of clothing, laid upon the most sacred relics and through that very touch having become endowed with healing power, are reclaimed! All rejoice at touching their last thread, and whoever touches it will be healed.³⁴ (emphasis added)

³¹ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 2, line 23, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 128.

³² Moorhead, *Ambrose*, p. 151, n. 47.

³³ Ambrose, *Epist.* 22. 7, lines 70–74, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 131.

³⁴ Cf. Acts 5. 15 and 19. 12, respectively. Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 9, lines 81–92, CSEL, 82. 3, pp. 131–32: 'Non immerito autem plerique hanc martyrum resurrectionem appellant: videro tamen utrum sibi, nobis certe martyres resurrexerint. Cognovistis, imo vidistis ipsi multos a daemoneis purgatos: plurimos etiam, ubi vestem sanctorum manibus contigerunt, iis quibus laborabant, debilitatibus absolutos: reparata vetusti temporis miracula, quo se per adventum Domini Jesu gratia terris maior infuderat, umbra quadam sanctorum corporum plerosque sanatos cernitis. Quanta

Ambrose is telling his audience that this must be the annunciation of the now imminent thousand-year rule of Christ with the risen saints.³⁵ This would certainly have stimulated an expectation of more miracles. The Bishop then explains, however, that the martyrs also have another task:

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus, that you have stirred up the spirit of the holy martyrs for us at this time when your church wants greater protection. Let all know what sort of defenders I need, who are able to fight and not accustomed to attack. These I acquired for you, holy people: so that they may help everyone and hurt no one. Such defenders do I request, such soldiers do I have: not worldly soldiers but soldiers of Christ. I fear no envy on account of such men, whose patronage (*patrocinium*) is safer the more powerful it is. And I wish for their protection of those very persons who begrudge them to me. Let them come and see my attendants. I do not deny that I am surrounded by such arms: 'Some trust in chariots, others in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord our God.'³⁶

Against the actual use of force, the Church of the heavenly Prince of Peace had found invisible defenders. Although Ambrose uses the terms 'defender' and 'soldier' here, these are clearly functions of their 'patronage' — then a new concept as related to the cult of the martyrs. As the inspiring studies of Peter Brown have shown, it was Ambrose who with this very coup initiated the translation of contemporary secular concepts and practices of patronage to the heavenly sphere that was to be widely imitated thereafter.³⁷ Ambrose's own biographer, however, still does not use these terms twenty-five years later.

oraria iactantur! quanta indumenta super reliquias sacratissimas et tactu ipso medicabilia repossuntur! Gaudent omnes extrema linea contingere; et qui contigerit, salvus erit.'

³⁵ Revelation 20. 1–6. Momigliano, 'Pagan and Christian Historiography', pp. 84–85, notes the absence of millenarianism in the early fourth century (Eusebius), Jerome's discrediting of the notion, and its emergence in the later part of the century in the writings of Hilary of Poitiers and Sulpicius, attributing this to 'disasters' in that period.

³⁶ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 10, lines 93–105, CSEL, 82. 3, pp. 132–33: 'Gratias tibi, Domine Iesus, quod hoc tempore tales nobis sanctorum martyrum spiritus excitasti quo Ecclesia tua praesidia maiora desiderat. Cognoscant omnes quales ego propugnatores requiram, qui propugnare possint, impugnare non soleant. Hos ego acquisivi tibi, plebs sancta, qui prosint omnibus, nemini noceant. Tales egoambio defensores, tales milites habeo: hoc est, non saeculi milites, sed milites Christi. Nullam de talibus invidiam timeo, quorum quo maiora, eo tutior patrocinia sunt. Horum etiam illis ipsis, qui mihi eos invident, opto praesidia. Veniant ergo et videant stipatores meos; talibus me armis ambiri non nego: "Hi in curribus, et hi in equis: nos autem in nomine Domini Dei nostri magnificabimur.'" It is well known that Ambrose had eastern contacts; John Chrysostom (Johannes Chrysostomus) had also spoken of martyrs as defending a city in his *Laudatio martyrum Aegyptiorum*, cols 694[D]–695[A]; trans. by Mayer in *Cult of the Saints*, p. 211.

³⁷ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 62–64.

Ambrose continues by citing a biblical precedent: he reminds his audience of how the prophet Elisha, when surrounded by the Syrian army, had relied upon what he knew to be a huge invisible army of angels around him (II Kings 6. 16). Now too,

although we cannot see them, we nevertheless feel their presence. Our eyes were shut as long as the bodies of the saints, covered with earth, were hidden. [Now] the Lord has opened our eyes and we see the aid through which we have often been protected. We used not to see them, but yet we had them. And so, as though the Lord had said to us while we trembled, ‘See what great martyrs I have given you’, so we with opened eyes behold the glory of the Lord, the past [glory] in the passion of the martyrs, and the present [glory] in their working [miracles]. Brothers, we have escaped no slight load of shame; we had patrons (*patron[i]*) and we did not know it. We have found this one thing, however, in which we seem to excel those who have gone before us: the knowledge of the holy martyrs’ [presence], which they lost, we have regained.³⁸

Then turning to describe how they were found and identified as martyrs, he says:

The relics are taken out of an ignoble burying-place by us; the trophies are exposed to the sky. The tomb is wet with blood. The traces of the triumphal blood are present, the relics are found undisturbed in their order — the head separated from the body.³⁹

Did ‘blood’ need to be found as proof of the martyrdom? It was regarded as the bearer of life and indeed as the sign par excellence of martyrdom, for through sacrificing his blood the martyr achieved Paradise.⁴⁰ As already indicated, we do not know how the ancient graves could have been perceived or described as wet with blood unless traces of tissue were regarded as ‘blood’ and Ambrose is speaking metaphorically — thereby, however, perhaps introducing a model of religious

³⁸ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 11, lines 111–22, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 133: ‘Nos etsi eos videre non possumus, sentimus tamen. Erant clausi isti oculi, quamdiu obruta sanctorum corpora delitescabant. Aperuit oculos nostros Dominus, videmus auxilia, quibus sumus saepe defensi. Non videbamus haec, sed habebamus tamen. Itaque trepidantibus nobis quasi dixerit Dominus: “Aspicite quantos vobis martyres dederim”: ita reseratis oculis gloriam Domini speculamur, quae est martyrum passione praeterita, et operatione praesens. Evasimus, fratres, non mediocrem pudoris sarcinam: patronos habebamus, et nesciebamus. Invenimus unum hoc, quo videamur praestare maioribus. Sanctorum martyrum cognitionem, quam illi amiserunt, nos adepti sumus.’

³⁹ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 12, lines 123–27, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 134: ‘Eruuntur nobis reliquiae e sepulcro ignobili, ostenduntur coelo tropaea. Sanguine tumulus madet, apparent cruoris triumphalis notae, inviolatae reliquiae loco suo et ordine repertae, avulsum humeris caput.’

⁴⁰ Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien*, p. 64. On the general background of antique, Jewish, and Christian notions about blood, see Waszink, ‘Blut’.

imagination that later reappears in Paulinus's biography ostensibly as his own perception.⁴¹

How did anyone know whose bodies they were? Ambrose tells his audience that old men say they once heard the names of these martyrs and had seen these in inscriptions on tombs; not knowing about them, Milan had imported relics from other places but had lost her own.⁴² The Bishop says that he could not refuse the grace given by Jesus, and because he himself did not merit to become a martyr, he had acquired martyrs for his people.⁴³ Although he had intended the altar here for his own burial, he will now cede the right-hand part to them. Paulinus later notes that 'by the beneficial actions of the martyrs, as much as the faith of the Catholic Church increased, the treachery among the Arians diminished'.⁴⁴ Ambrose's next paragraph describes this very 'perfidy' then being acted out.

To forestall what he expected to be an investigation by his opponents at court of his unauthorized translation of these bodies — an imperial law of a few months earlier had specifically prohibited the exhumation and translation especially of martyrs' bodies⁴⁵ — and of their authenticity as martyrs, Ambrose managed to have the interment of the two bodies under the altar carried out the very next day.⁴⁶ In his sermon on this occasion he turns to the envy of what must be the Arian party:

they are so insane as to deny the merits of the martyrs, whose deeds even the evil spirits confess. [...] [For] at this time you have heard the demons crying out and confessing that they cannot endure the punishments of the martyrs, and saying 'Why have you come to torment us so severely?' And the Arians say: 'These are not martyrs and they cannot torment the devil or liberate anyone', when the torments of the demons are proven by their own words, and the benefits of the martyrs are shown in the signs of the restoration of the healed and of those who are released [from demons].⁴⁷

⁴¹ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XXXII. 3, lines 10–11, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 94.

⁴² Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 12, lines 126–29, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 134.

⁴³ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 12, lines 129–32, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 134. Cf., on Ambrose's admiration of martyrdom, perhaps for himself, Moorhead, *Ambrose*, pp. 134–37.

⁴⁴ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XIV. 3, lines 17–19, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 72: 'his beneficiis martyrum in quantum crescebat fides Ecclesiae catholicae, in tantum Arianorum perfidia minuebatur'.

⁴⁵ Dassmann, 'Ambrosius und die Märtyrer', p. 57.

⁴⁶ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 213.

⁴⁷ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 16, lines 159–72, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 136: 'in tantum amentiae prodeunt ut negent martyrum merita, quorum opera etiam daemones confitentur. [...] nunc audistis clamantes daemones, et confitentes martyribus quod poenas ferre non possint, et dicentes: "Quid

The voices of the possessed were regarded as those of the spirits possessing them.⁴⁸ But since the cure of the blind man too is denied by Ambrose's enemies, he marshals his evidence:

They deny that the blind man received sight, but he himself does not deny that he is healed. He says: 'I see, who used not to see.' [...] They deny the benefaction; they cannot deny the fact. This man was known, while he was well he was employed in the public service. His name is Severus, and he was a butcher by trade. He gave up his occupation when his disability befell him. He calls for evidence those persons by whose kindness he was supported; he adduces those who were witnesses of his blindness as able to affirm the truth of his visitation [by the martyrs]. He declares that when he touched the hem of the martyrs' robe, with which the sacred relics were clothed, his sight was restored to him.

Is this not like that which we read in the Gospel? For we praise the power of the same Creator in each case. [...] For that which he gave to others [his disciples] to be done, this his Name effects in the works of others.⁴⁹

Ambrose's word choice here implicitly likens Severus's healing to Christ's cure of the woman with an issue of blood (Matthew 9. 20). The miracles, then, are Christ's, and now again continue through those who cleave to him. Turning then again to his court opponents, Ambrose asks:

What then is it that they do not believe: whether anyone can be visited by the martyrs? This is the same thing as not to believe in Christ, for he himself said: 'You shall do greater things than these' [John 14. 12]. How? By those martyrs whose merits have long been efficacious, whose bodies were long since found? Here I ask, do they bear a grudge against me, or against the holy martyrs? If against me, are any miracles wrought by me? by my means or in my name? Why then begrudge me what is not mine? If it be against the martyrs [...], they show that the martyrs were of another faith than that which they believe.

venistis, ut nos tam graviter torqueatis?" Et Ariani dicunt: "Non sunt isti martyres, nec torquere diabolum possunt, nec aliquem liberare", cum tormenta daemonum ipsorum voce probentur, et beneficia martyrum remediis sanatorum, et absolutorum indiciis declarentur."

⁴⁸ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 111; on exorcism as the prime manifestation of the saint's power: pp. 106–12.

⁴⁹ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 17, lines 173–74, 175–83, and 18, lines 184–86, 187–88, CSEL, 82. 3, pp. 136–37: 'Negant caecum illuminatum, sed ille non negat se sanatum [...]. Isti beneficium negant, qui factum negare non possunt. Notus homo est, publicis cum valeret mancipatus obsequiis, Severus nomine, lanius ministerio. Deposuerat officium, postquam inciderat impedimentum. Vocat ad testimonium homines, quorum ante sustentabatur obsequiis; eos indices suae visitationis arcessit, quos habebat testes et arbitros caecitatis. Clamat quia ut contigit fimbriam de veste martyrum, qua sacrae reliquiae vestiuntur, redditum sibi lumen sit. Nonne simile istud est, atque illud quod in Evangelio legimus? Unius enim potentiam laudamus auctoris [...]. Quod enim aliis faciendum donaverit, hoc in aliorum opere nomen eius operatur.'

For otherwise they would not have any feeling against their works [...]. The demons said today, yesterday, and during the night: ‘We know that you are martyrs.’ And the Arians say: ‘We know not, we will not understand, we will not believe.’ The demons say to the martyrs: ‘You are come to destroy us.’ The Arians say: ‘The torments of the demons are not real but false and invented ridiculous nonsense. I have heard much being made up, but no one has ever been able to feign being an evil spirit. What is it which we see in those upon whom hands are laid? What room is there for fraud? What room for suspicion of simulation?’⁵⁰

Ambrose here adduces the tradition of Christ’s and apostolic miracles — by living men — to explain miracles through now invisible dead Christian heroes. Although, as we saw, the demons may well also have referred to Ambrose torturing them and the possessed appear to have received his or others’ laying on of hands, the Bishop denies any involvement in the cure, focusing upon the martyrs’ power. Paulinus later reports that the court suspected Ambrose of paying people to feign possession.⁵¹ Referring, however, to modern studies of contemporary states of possession in traditional societies and of possession as a well-attested phenomenon in the ancient world, Brown indicates that people could come to the church in order to become possessed, to act out in a psychodrama an as yet vaguely sensed but debilitating inner conflict which could not otherwise be expressed, and thereby to be freed of it.⁵² Ostensibly knowing this, Ambrose could of course have suggested to them before the disinterment that if martyrs were found, these might exorcize their ‘demons’, and this could have helped to trigger their reaction when the headless — thus evidently martyred — bodies were unearthed.

⁵⁰ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 19–20, lines 199–209, 22, lines 227–36, CSEL, 82. 3, pp. 138–39: ‘Sed quaero quid non credant: utrum a martyribus possint aliqui visitari? Hoc est Christo non credere; ipse enim dixit: “Et maiora his facietis.” An ab istis martyribus, quorum merita iam dudum vigent, corpora dudum reperta sunt? Quaero hic utrum mihi, an sanctis martyribus inuideant? Si mihi, nunquid a me aliquae virtutes fiunt; nunquid meo opere, meo nomine. Cur igitur mihi invident, quod meum non est? Si martyribus [...] ostendunt alterius fidei fuisse martyres, quam ipsi credunt. Neque enim aliter eorum operibus invident. [...] Dicebant hodie et superiore die vel nocte daemones: “Scimus quia martyres estis.” Et Ariani dicunt: “Nescimus, nolumus intelligere, nolumus credere.” Dicunt daemones martyribus: “Venistis perdere nos”; Ariani dicunt: “Non sunt daemonorum vera tormenta, sed ficta et composita ludibria.” Audivi multa componi, hoc nemo umquam fingere potuit, ut daemonem se esse simularet. Quid illud, quod ita exagitari eos videmus, quibus manus imponitur? Ubi hic locus fraudi est? ubi suspicio simulandi?’

⁵¹ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XV. 1, lines 3–9, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 72.

⁵² On possession, see Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 108, n. 7 and 8, mentioning among others Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, and Lewis, ‘Exorzismus’. I would add Sargant, *Mind Possessed*. On seeking a psychodrama, see Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 110–11.

But the Bishop does not want his whole ‘proof’ to rest upon the demons’ voices alone. He adduces the sane voices of the healed:

But I shall not on that account take on the voice of demons to support the martyrs’ intercession. Their sacred suffering is proven by the benefits they confer. For they have judges: those cleansed [from demons]; and they have witnesses: those released [from afflictions]. A better voice is that of the health of those who came [here] sick; a better voice [too] is that which the blood sends forth, for blood has a melodious voice that reaches from earth to heaven. You have read how God said: ‘Your brother’s blood cries unto me’ [Genesis 4. 10]. And this blood [of the martyrs] cries by its colour, the blood cries by the public praise of its working, the blood cries by the triumph of [the martyrs’] suffering.⁵³

Ambrose’s enemies could still doubt the testimonies of those who were exorcized too, of course; like Severus, they too may have been dependents of his church. The ‘testimony’ of the blood — presumably that which was ‘recognized’ in the grave, as a sign, proof, and metonymy of the more inclusive notion of the martyrs’ passion — is an invitation to ‘dream’ of the martyrs’ healing power, connecting earth with heaven, in this multidimensional dynamic image. What we have just seen Ambrose do in this sermon is provide his community with a visual model, not only for recognizing but also for *expecting* a miracle. Once one miracle has been accepted as authentic, people’s mental and affective horizons would be open to having another one happen, perhaps to themselves.

Paulinus reports that, at the time of Gervasius and Protasius’s translation, someone in the crowd suddenly became possessed of an unclean spirit, crying out that those heretics ‘qui negarent martyres’ (who denied the authenticity of the martyrs) and/or did not believe in the unity of the Trinity that Ambrose taught would be tortured by the martyrs just as the demons in him were being tortured; the Arians seized him and, perhaps in an attempt to calm him down, drowned him in a bath.⁵⁴ These testimonies of disbelief and scepticism and of the Bishop’s defence against them is precious evidence of the situation in which miracles began to be officially recognized by the Church, as well as contested by those not in the same religious community who resisted the growth of their enemies’ reputation

⁵³ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 23, lines 237–46, CSEL, 82. 3, pp. 139–40: ‘Sed non ergo ad suffragium martyrum usurpo vocem daemoniorum. Beneficiis suis sacra passio comprobetur. Habet iudices, sed purgatos; habet testes, sed absolutos. Melior vox est, quam sanitas loquitur eorum, qui debiles advenierunt; melior vox est, quam sanguis emittit, habet enim sanguis vocem canoram, quae de terris ad coelum pervenit. Legistis dicente Deo: “Sanguis fratris tui clamat ad me.” Et hic sanguis clamat coloris indicio; sanguis clamat operationis praeconio; sanguis clamat passionis triumpho.’

⁵⁴ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XVI. 1–2, lines 3–9, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 74. Cf. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 213.

because of them — a situation similar to that of the former pagan competition. We will see below that Church writers defending the new miracles against sceptics will appeal to the necessity for a unity of perception within the community and qualify dissent as blasphemy and heresy, in fact as disloyalty to God. Acceptance or non-acceptance of a miracle as an affective phenomenon, then, is not accomplished only through a verbal persuasion that points to already accepted historical precedents but, as Ambrose's sermon shows, also by appealing to solidarity within the Church.

The imperial court's investigation into the authenticity of the martyrs and into the proceedings of the translation never took place, and although Ambrose's opponents remained unpersuaded, probably some official acknowledgment was made: the Bishop had put them before a *fait accompli*.⁵⁵ Were there also Catholics in the city who doubted? As we shall see, Augustine's failure to be impressed at the time is significant. Whereas it is indeed possible to suspect a subtle stage-managing of the possessed, the sudden real cure of the blind man, attested by reliable witnesses, is hardly refutable. McLynn describes what Peter Brown has designated Ambrose's masterly directing of the 'rewiring' of existing ideas and loyalties in these events as 'the holding of a wolf by the ears'.⁵⁶

What looks like Ambrose's masterly extension of his community's veneration of the martyrs to include their 'patronage' and potential miracles to help maintain the independence of the Church against violence from outside was a strategic answer to a perceived need, and it eventually inspired imitation throughout the western Roman world.⁵⁷ Paulinus of Nola's subsequent appropriation in the nineties of the cult of the martyr Felix in Nola resembles that of the Bishop, and seventy years later Bishop Perpetuus of Tours's commissioning of a verse reworking by another Paulinus of the dead Saint Martin's miracles also turned to this saint's protection when his city faced imminent Germanic occupation. In addition, Ambrose's sending parts of Milan's new patron saints' relics to his episcopal colleagues in the west established a kind of 'power network': we still find churches dedicated to them, for instance in Paris and Tours. All this clearly created religious excitement and must have greatly stimulated thinking about and hoping for contemporary miracles.

Paulinus of Milan's biography of Ambrose gives very brief, matter-of-fact, descriptions of the Bishop's own few miraculous cures through prayer,⁵⁸ but there

⁵⁵ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 215.

⁵⁶ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 217.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 36–39, 90–91.

⁵⁸ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, X and XXVIII, ed. by Bastiaensen, pp. 66 and 88.

were also other dynamics at play. As Peter Brown circumspectly writes: 'In popular belief, the line between [saints and sorcerers] was very thin: St. Ambrose, to name only one saint, was associated with twelve deaths — more deaths than stand to the credit of any late Roman *maleficus* [wizard].'⁵⁹ Paulinus's *Life of Ambrose*, qualifying these sudden deaths as divine chastisements (the term 'miracle' is not used and Ambrose's role is studiously indirect) connected with affronts to Ambrose or to the Church, reveals a striking conceptual expansion — in fact, inversion — of the new (beneficent) miracles; punitive 'miracles' would become increasingly prominent in stories of future times of greater physical insecurity. As such, it is surprising that this mentality's first substantial appearance in Latin Christian spiritual biography — up to then it had been visible to some extent only in historiography⁶⁰ — has not yet received as much attention as it deserves. Paulinus's biography is the only western text that treats somewhat extensively of miracles and presumed divine acts in the period between the last of Paulinus of Nola's extant poems in 407 and the Uzalian stories about the martyr Stephen's miracles around 424.

In the modern literature about Ambrose too, until recently not much attention has been paid to the divine chastisements which Paulinus recounts. In 1935, F. Homes Dudden's biography devotes one chapter to the events around Ambrose's propagation of the martyr cult, giving rational explanations of the miracles associated with it, and simply lists the other miracles and 'divine judgements' in a note without comment.⁶¹ In 1960, Angelo Paredi's biography similarly mentions only some of these and in passing.⁶² In 1962, Jacques Fontaine, in a review, distinguished three kinds of miracles in Paulinus's *Life*: inexplicable events 'objectively' reported by a number of persons, oral traditions alongside or around these facts, and hagiographical motifs which Paulinus had culled from his professed models, the *Lives* of Anthony, the hermit Paul, and Martin.⁶³ Although these saints may have been the ones most admired in the time that he wrote, the few miracles which he describes most directly resemble those of Martin. Another, much earlier, scholar

⁵⁹ Brown, 'Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity'; on Ambrose, pp. 129–30 (repr.).

⁶⁰ Most prominently in Lactantius's *De morte persecutorum*, ed. and trans. by Creed. It was written in 314/15. The 'divine judgements' in the stories of the Desert Fathers are very few and generally serve as an incentive to conversion; cf. Ward, 'Introduction', pp. 44–45. In historiography, see Momigliano, 'Pagan and Christian Historiography', pp. 79–80.

⁶¹ Dudden, *Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, I, 298–320, and II, 492, n. 1.

⁶² Paredi, *S. Ambrogio, e la sua età*, trans. by Costelloe as *Saint Ambrose: His Life and Times*, for instance on pp. 197 and 361.

⁶³ Fontaine, Review of *Vita di S. Ambrogio*, ed. by Pellegrino, pp. 332–33.

has thoughtfully characterized some of Paulinus's descriptions of miracles (along with some in the Martin stories) as 'rhetoric turned into logic; or metaphors turned into fact; or spiritual events clothed (as in *Pilgrim's Progress*) in objective garb; or simple exaggerations of actual but uncommon occurrences'.⁶⁴ Understanding Paulinus's descriptions of events that appeared to be miraculous, then, is about understanding the preconceptions involved in their perception and the choice of these specific ones over possible others.

Only Émilien Lamirande, in 1983, has subjected Paulinus's descriptions of the punitive events to a somewhat detailed discussion.⁶⁵ His analysis focuses upon ethical issues and what appears to be the retreat of evangelical values. As far as I could find, what has not yet been examined in a detailed manner by any of the discussions of Paulinus's representation of extraordinary events around Ambrose is the biographer's view of the precise nexus between what the Bishop so forcefully said and the events, perceived as divinely caused, that subsequently happened — in other words, Ambrose's role in bringing this divine power to the spot. Paulinus understood it through a number of assumptions, patterns, and images of thought about the function and mediated power of biblical prophets which he only in part makes explicit. They must be responsible for the fact that he appears to be completely unconcerned, if not in fact grimly satisfied, about deaths following upon what, from our perspective, were sometimes relatively minor misdemeanours against the Bishop. This attitude points away from the model of the forgiving Martin and ahead to similarly unabashed stories of divine 'vengeance' of Gregory of Tours, living in a violent Frankish world a hundred and fifty years later.⁶⁶

For as Paulinus describes his subject, Ambrose donned the mantle of the biblical prophet: his biblically inspired words, like those of the Old Testament prophets, are described as being almost directly followed by — even seeming to precipitate — divine effects. Perhaps to deflect a possible accusation by outsiders of sorcery here, Paulinus consistently presents them as fulfilments of a prophetic saying or event in the Bible, just as Ambrose had earlier described the martyrs' new miracles. At one point, he describes Ambrose as addressing the Emperor Theodosius as though he were the mouthpiece of God himself, warning him in the first-person singular of divine punishment if he does not, by proper deferential behaviour, show

⁶⁴ Farrar, *Lives of the Fathers*, II, 187, n. 1; cited by Lamirande, *Paulin de Milan et la Vita Ambrosii*, p. 117, n. 26. Farrar's book was not available to me.

⁶⁵ Lamirande, *Paulin de Milan et la Vita Ambrosii*, pp. 111–34.

⁶⁶ See on this, for instance, de Nie, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower*, pp. 146–51, 268–72, 276–87.

gratitude for the benefactions he has received;⁶⁷ although the Emperor did not appear to be impressed that time, he eventually realized that it would be more useful to submit to the Bishop on spiritual matters. Others who had disrespected the Bishop were not so lucky. Two heretical court chamberlains were thrown to their death from a chariot after they had neglected to keep an appointment with him.⁶⁸ Similarly, a brash heretical virgin, who tried to stop him physically from presiding at a disputed episcopal election, died a day after Ambrose had warned her to fear possible divine judgement for this.⁶⁹ Seeing the result, these threatening words are likely to have been perceived as an indirect curse — unleashing their content — that caused the young woman's body's autonomous systems to shut down, a phenomenon that has been observed in present-day traditional societies.⁷⁰ Paulinus makes it clear that all this engendered great fear, also among the Bishop's own clergy. It may have been a necessary strategy to stay alive.

For the story about a diviner (*aruspex*) who was prosecuted after the death of Empress Justina in 388 illustrates the physical danger the Bishop lived in and how his position was perceived by some of his contemporaries. Formerly an official state practice in pagan Rome, divination had no place in an empire in which paganism had been officially proscribed in 391, and Paulinus indicates that the man was accordingly accused of sorcery, which was punishable by death.⁷¹ During the then customary judicial torture this sorcerer is said to have cried 'that he had [earlier] suffered greater torments from the angel who protected Ambrose'.⁷² For

during Justina's life he had, in order to incite the people's hate for the Bishop, gone up upon the roof of the church in the middle of the night and made sacrifices [to demons]. But the more urgently and anxiously he exercised his evil works, the more the people's love grew strong for the Catholic faith and for the Bishop of the Lord. He said that he even sent demons to kill the man; but the demons came back to tell him that they were in no way able to approach not only him but even the doors of the house in which the Bishop stayed,

⁶⁷ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XXIII. 1, lines 3–10, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 82.

⁶⁸ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XVIII. 1–3, lines 1–17, ed. by Bastiaensen, pp. 74–76.

⁶⁹ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XI. 1–2, lines 7–16, ed. by Bastiaensen, pp. 66–68.

⁷⁰ On curses in this period, see Brun, *Segen und Fluch im Urchristentum*, and Hopfner, 'Mageia'; on the effect of ensorcellment, see Devisch, 'Maleficent Fetishes and the Sensual Order of the Uncanny'.

⁷¹ References in Bastiaensen, pp. 301–02, n. 20.1 and 2–3. On magic in this period, see Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity'. On magic in the Bible, see Brown, 'Magic, Sorcery, Magi'.

⁷² Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XX. 1, lines 4–5, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 78: 'ab angelo maiora tormenta sibi adhiberi eo qui custodiret Ambrosium'.

because an impassable fire fortified that whole building, consuming them even at a distance. Because of all this, he [the diviner] had stopped [practising] his arts, of which he had thought that they could harm the Bishop of the Lord.⁷³

The implication is, of course, that Justina had put him up to this; the reader is not told for what magic he was being prosecuted nor what happened to him thereafter. Paulinus is likely to have assumed the man's subsequent fate to be self-evident. What we see here, significantly, is that the conflict between the Catholics and the heretics was perceived by both sides as also being carried out by spiritual powers invoked by or supporting each party: for Paulinus, it would look like the demons against the more powerful God. Peter Brown has pointed to the fact that in this period accusations of sorcery are seen to occur when an ill-defined, inarticulate power attempted to gain influence upon an established, articulated one. Thus, in the then still developing relationship between the emperor and the bishops of the newly recognized Christian Church, even the powerful orator and influential Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, for instance, was accused of sorcery, and as we saw Brown hints that the twelve deaths associated with Ambrose may well have raised similar suspicions.⁷⁴ Paulinus pre-empts any such accusation by showing that each event accords with the directionality of God's power as recorded in the Bible; Ambrose's stance was merely that of the stern observer — if also that of the beneficiary. Underneath Paulinus's lapidary sentences, I suggest, may lie a once-heated discussion in Milan between Arians and Catholics about the role and the nature of invisible powers in the conflict.

How greatly Ambrose was feared even after his death appears in Paulinus's postscript to the biography. There he wishes to show 'how the Lord's saying which was spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets was fulfilled'⁷⁵ — a theme that recurs throughout the biography, Ambrose being the 'prophet'. This time the sayings are

⁷³ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XX. 1–3, lines 5–17, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 78: 'Quoniam temporibus Iustinae ad excitanda odia populorum in episcopum cacumen tecti ecclesiae conscendens medio noctis sacrificaverit. Sed quanto instantius et sollicitius opera maligna exercebat, tanto magis amor populi circa fidem catholicam et Domini sacerdotem convalescebat. Mississe etiam se daemones, qui illum internecarent, fatebatur; sed daemones renuntiassse se minime non solum ad ipsum adpropinquare posse, verum etiam nec ad fores domus in qua manebat episcopus, quoniam ignis insuperabilis omne illud aedificium communiret, ut etiam longe positi urerentur: ita cessasse artes suas, quibus adversus Domini sacerdotem se aliquid posse arbitrabatur.' On demons in the Bible, see Bietenhard, 'Demon, Air, Cast Out'.

⁷⁴ Brown, 'Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity', p. 130.

⁷⁵ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, LIII. 1, lines 2–4, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 120: 'ut Domini dictum, quod per os sanctorum prophetarum locutus est, impletum esse'.

'The one who sits [in judgement] against his brother and slanders him in secret, him I shall punish',⁷⁶ and 'Don't enjoy slandering, lest you be destroyed'.⁷⁷ As will be seen, Sulpicius would similarly conclude his *Life of Martin* with a warning that those who did not believe Martin's miracles would sin.⁷⁸ Paulinus will add these last stories, he says, 'so that whoever has perhaps inadvertently acquired this habit might change his ways for the better when he reads how, against those who dared to slander the holy man, he [Ambrose] was avenged'.⁷⁹ This use of the verb 'avenged' betrays an Old rather than New Testament mentality gaining ground; we shall see it reappear when times were even more insecure. The matter at issue here, however, was Ambrose's defence of a certain doctrine which was disputed by others. McLynn notes that 'too much had been invested in Ambrose's reputation by too many ecclesiastical organizations [...] to permit his reputation to be subjected to any real scrutiny from within the ecclesiastical establishment'.⁸⁰

Thus Paulinus tells us that Donatus, an African who had been a priest at Milan, spoke badly of his former bishop at a meal; when this led to those around him dissociating themselves from his company, 'he was suddenly struck by a serious wound [attack?] and taken by strange hands from where he was lying and put in a bed, from where he was carried to his grave'.⁸¹ Here it is someone's own 'destructive' words that bring on his demise. This incident may be a case of the public destruction of the personality and the abject fear perhaps induced by his table companions' warnings leading to a spontaneous shutdown of the body.⁸²

⁷⁶ 'Sedentem adversus fratrem suam et detrahentem occulte persequeretur'. Cf. Psalm 49. 20 (50. 20) and 100. 5 (101. 5); Bastiaensen (Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, p. 334, n. 53, 4–5) notes that this is the form of the text in the old Roman psalter.

⁷⁷ 'Noli diligere detrahere, ne eradicemini', Proverbs 20. 13; Bastiaensen (Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, p. 335, n. 53. 6) identifies this as according to an older version of Proverbs.

⁷⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXVII. 6, SC, 133, p. 316.

⁷⁹ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, LIV. 1, lines 6–9, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 120: 'ut quicumque forte huiusmodi captus est consuetudine, cum legerit qualiter in his qui sancto viro detrahere ausi sunt fuerit vindicatum, ipse etiam in aliis emendetur'.

⁸⁰ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, p. 372.

⁸¹ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, LIV. 1, lines 5–7, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 122: 'subito vulnere percussus gravi, de eodem loco in quo iacebat, alienis manibus sublatus, in lectulum positus est, atque inde ad sepulcrum usque perductus'.

⁸² Lévi-Strauss, 'Le Sorcier et sa magie', p. 182 (repr.); although the context here is ensorcellment, the author makes clear that the statement has a wider applicability.

The last story is about a meal attended by bishops and deacons in Carthage at which Paulinus himself was present and, astoundingly, it describes his own role in effecting a replication of Donatus's sudden death. He writes:

Then [when] Muranus, bishop of Bol, began disparaging the holy man [Ambrose], I told the story about the passing of the above-mentioned priest. And that what was said about someone else was an oracle about him (*de se oraculum*) was proven by his attack soon thereafter.⁸³

For Muranus too, 'cum subito vulnere ingenti esset percussus' (when he had been suddenly struck with a huge wound [attack?]) in the place where he lay dining, was carried by others to a bed, and then to the house where he was staying, to end his life there on that day.⁸⁴ In Late Antiquity, reciting 'historiolae' (little stories) in order to make the events recited happen again was a well-known practice in Christian prayer as well as in pagan magic.⁸⁵ This is because the words describing the former incident were thought to participate in its power pattern and their sounding 'presenced' it, called it down upon a person in a similar situation: attraction, again, through formal similarity. As we have seen, the universe was conceived of as cohering through resemblances. Psychologically speaking, the narrated image of Donatus's punishment will also certainly have helped to precipitate its replication by so frightening Bishop Muranus that, through involuntary affective mimesis, his body slipped into the same deadly pattern. Having been warned by all this, Paulinus concludes, let the reader imitate Ambrose's life, praise God's grace, and reject disparaging words, if he wants to enjoy the Bishop's company in the next world rather than suffer the torture of hell together with the slanderers.⁸⁶ The story is intended to spread fear and submission.

Paulinus, then, presented Ambrose as an Old Testament-style prophet who relayed God's word to the ruler and others and, as the author believes, often saw these words divinely carried out. The *Life* shows that in a situation fraught with conflict and insecurity, miracles and divine retribution now could be perceived, if not also expected, to support and defend the Church's personnel and policies in a

⁸³ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, LIV. 2, lines 12–15, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 122: 'Tunc Murano episcopo detrahenti sancto viro rettuli exitum presbyteri superius memorati: quod ille de alio dictum de se oraculum maturo sui ictu comprobavit.'

⁸⁴ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, LIV. 3, lines 15–18, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 122.

⁸⁵ See on this Frankfurter, 'Narrating Power'. On the perceived power of words, see Janowitz, *Poetics of Ascent*.

⁸⁶ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, LV. 1, lines 1–5, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 122.

newly aggressive manner. Spoken and written words about spiritual power, then, are perceived to bring it to the spot and to invite it to act analogously. The wearing of inscribed amulets in the late antique period shows that written verbal representations too of certain powerful names and deeds were regarded as participating in their power.⁸⁷ In modern language theory, in contrast to an 'index' word that merely points to its referent, a word or group of words that formally resembles and thereby possesses the character or quality of that which it signifies has been referred to as an 'icon'.⁸⁸ Whether or not Paulinus himself was fully aware of it, a number of stories in his biography of the 'prophet' Ambrose — and especially the last one — can be read as icons of power.

In Ambrose's other writings, however, we see that notwithstanding his propagation of present-day miracles through the martyrs as a defence of the Church and its doctrines, he was reserved about miracles in general. The subject comes up most frequently in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, the one about which he says that is the most historical and has the most miracles — but also all kinds of wisdom.⁸⁹ Following the order of the Gospel original, Ambrose's presentation — as we shall see, significantly — alternates Christ's preaching with his miracles and adds pervasive light imagery.⁹⁰ Although he reiterates the traditional view that Christ's miracles were then necessary to authenticate his mission,⁹¹ he asserts — and this is a crucial change from what we saw to be the view up to then that faith should not need them — that they cannot happen except to believers, through their faith.⁹² Instead, then, of being reserved, disparagingly, for those who will not believe without them, they are now regarded as the reward of an already existing faith and more or less expected to be part of contemporary religious life. Nevertheless, Ambrose's following programmatic statement relativizes their position: 'It is through the Word [of God] and its intelligible meaning, not through signs [that is, miracles], that our faith is grounded.'⁹³ Forty or more years later, the poet Sedulius, in his

⁸⁷ Examples in *Ancient Christian Magic*, ed. by Meyer and Smith.

⁸⁸ Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, pp. xxii–xxiii.

⁸⁹ Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* [hereafter *Exp. Luc.*], *prol.* 4, lines 49–52, CCSL, 14, p. 3.

⁹⁰ As in Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, II. 12, line 184, CCSL, 14, p. 36: 'lux vera et genitor lucis aeternae'.

⁹¹ As in Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, II. 75, lines 975–76, CCSL, 14, p. 62.

⁹² For instance in Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, IV. 49, lines 587–91, CCSL, 14, p. 123.

⁹³ Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, I. 4, lines 57–58, CCSL, 14, p. 8: 'verbo atque ratione, non signis fides nostra fundatur'.

rendering of the Gospel, was to present its miracles rather than its verbalized doctrine as communicating the core of the faith.

Compared with Juvenius, however, Ambrose did present the miracles in Luke's Gospel in a new way. As one of the first Latin writers to employ the allegorical approach to biblical texts, he worked with a layered notion of truth. It interpreted texts not only by analysing the horizontal relations between events, but also and especially by discerning symbols in these that communicated a divine message at a deeper level.⁹⁴ Thus, in the first few sentences of the treatise, he states that three kinds of meaning will be looked for in the text: the 'naturalis' (literal or natural), the 'moralis' (moral) pointing to desired behaviour, and the 'rationalis' (the intelligible) that invites cognitive understanding of a truth; the last level communicates a divine message in symbols or, as he calls it, a 'mysterium' (mystery).⁹⁵

This third dimension appears to be regarded as primary when he says, for instance: 'let us look for the mystery which the miracle manifests'.⁹⁶ What is the difference between miracle and mystery? Of Mary's virginal conception, he says: 'I sense (*sentio*) the miracle, I know/apprehend (*cognosco*) the mystery'.⁹⁷ It is the difference between affective and intellectual apprehension. The changing of water into wine at Cana is therefore for him 'more a mystery than a miracle' because it is understood as a prefiguration of the Eucharist.⁹⁸ A miracle, then, is to be admired affectively as a manifestation or sign of divine power (*virtus*), whereas a 'mystery', as a message of divine wisdom (*sapientia*), is to be 'rationally' understood and in this way internalized.⁹⁹

Notwithstanding his light imagery, however, Ambrose does not make much of the cures of the blind in Luke's Gospel, mentioning only the one near Jericho (Luke 18. 35–43), and identifying its subject as 'the figure of the Gentile people that receives through the sacrament of the Lord the brightness of the light they had lost'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ See Pépin, *La Tradition de l'allégorie de Philon d'Alexandrie à Dante*.

⁹⁵ Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, *prol.* 2, lines 7–10, 32–33, CCSL, 14, pp. 1–2.

⁹⁶ Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, VI. 79, lines 832–33, CCSL, 14, p. 202: 'quaeramus ergo mysterium, quod miraculum praestet'.

⁹⁷ Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, II. 25, lines 355–56, CCSL, 14, p. 42: 'miraculum sentio, cognosco mysterium'.

⁹⁸ Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, II. 75, line 974, CCSL, 14, p. 62: 'mihi plus mysterium quam miraculum'.

⁹⁹ Ambrose, *De spiritu sancto*, II, *prol.*, 6, CSEL, 79, p. 88, lines 42–43.

¹⁰⁰ Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, VIII. 80, lines 988–89, CCSL, 14, p. 329: 'typus populi gentilis [...] qui sacramento dominico recepit amissi luminis claritatem'.

It is only in a personal letter that he explains the ‘mystery’ made visible in the cure of the man born blind in the Gospel of John (9), saying that the event shows the Creator, who made nature and who is also the Light of the world, now re-forming nature.¹⁰¹ The intelligible message (*ratio*) in Jesus’s putting spittle and mud on the man’s eyes and telling him to wash in the pool of Siloam, Ambrose says, is that Jesus here acted in a divine and in a sacramental manner: ‘as the Light he touched the man’s eyes and poured light into them, and as a priest he filled him with the mystery of spiritual grace through the figure of baptism.’¹⁰² The fact that Jesus put mud on the blind man’s eyes ‘signifies’ (*significat*) that he healed the man with the same mud from which he had ‘formed’ (*figuravit*) him, ‘so that this flesh of our mud might receive the light of eternal life through the sacrament of baptism’.¹⁰³ We shall see this kind of analysis and interpretation recur in a more elaborately imaged way in Augustine’s and Sedulius’s writings.

The difference between the apprehending of a miracle as such and of its ‘mystery’ thus appears to be that between a passively experienced affective sense perception and an active mental knowing as two separate processes. In his treatise *On Isaac and the Soul*, however, Ambrose combines these two processes in the knowing of the divine. There he speaks of the heart as the centre of apperception in man, and describes the soul’s relation to God as the yearning love between bride and bridegroom in the Song of Songs: ‘This is the kiss of the word [of God], the light of cognition of the holy, for God the Word kisses us when he illumines our heart and the very centre of the human being with the spirit of divine cognition’; for ‘this light of cognition has the perfection of love’.¹⁰⁴ It is love’s knowledge,¹⁰⁵ but through God’s word, not his miracles as such.

What kind of knowing is this and what is its object? Here Ambrose surprises again: the good soul, he writes, contemning visible and sensory things, ‘lifts itself through the pure consciousness of a pious mind to those things that are eternal and

¹⁰¹ Ambrose, *Epist.* 9. 67 (Maur. 80). 3, lines 20–21, CSEL 82. 2, p. 166.

¹⁰² Ambrose, *Epist.* 9. 67. 5, lines 35–37, CSEL, 82. 2, p. 167: ‘Quasi lux tetigit et lumen infudit, quasi sacerdos per figuram baptismatis mysteria gratiae spiritalis implevit.’

¹⁰³ Ambrose, *Epist.* 9. 67. 6, lines 40–45, CSEL, 82. 2, p. 167: ‘ut haec caro luti nostri per baptismatis sacramenta aeternae vitae lumen accipiat’.

¹⁰⁴ Ambrose, *De Isaac et anima*, III. 8, CSEL, 32. 1, p. 648, lines 1–3: ‘Hoc est enim osculum verbi, lumen scilicet cognitionis sacrae; osculatur enim nos deus verbum, quando cor nostrum et ipsum principale hominis spiritu divinae cognitionis illuminat.’

¹⁰⁵ Ambrose, *De Isaac et anima*, IV. 23, CSEL, 32. 1, p. 657, line 22: ‘lumen cognitionis habe[t] charitatis perfectionem’. Cf. Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*.

invisible and full of miracles'.¹⁰⁶ These invisible miracles seem to be the mysteries that visible miracles point to, and it is through the purified consciousness of piety that their knowing takes place. As will be seen, this was to be one of Augustine's central positions on biblical miracles as well. The cognition of the intelligible divine message or *ratio*, then, also involves the heart. Accordingly, in the treatise *On the Mysteries*, in which Ambrose explains the sacraments as spiritual enactments of analogous visible events in the Old Testament, he insists that these be explained to the initiates only *after* they had undergone them, because 'the light [that is, the understanding] of the mysteries [while they are being enacted] will pour itself better into the unknowing [mind/heart] than if someone's speech had preceded them'.¹⁰⁷ Here the affective enactment of the symbol is evidently held to prepare the proper disposition for an intelligible understanding.

Although Ambrose presented contemporary miracles through the martyrs as examples of their present power, then, he looked in biblical miracles for the contours of an intelligible 'mystery'. For him, while a miracle as such stimulates a useful admiration of divine power, not it but the affective understanding of God's *word* about the 'mystery' it manifests was the fundament of faith. We shall see that the poet Sedulius, half a century later, would take the 'knowing' of the 'mystery' from the 'word' to the image. Fifteen years after Ambrose's death, however, his biographer Paulinus describes him as a man of power whose words can send death to those who cross him. It is uncertain whether this representation reflects the perceived situation during Ambrose's lifetime or the changed mentality concerning miracles in the years after 400.¹⁰⁸

'What Is this Which Now Seems to Be Shown?': Puzzlement and Belief in Gaul

Alongside the Milanese court party's understandable opposition to the new miracles, however, there also appear to have been serious Christians for whom the surprise was too great. An undated letter to a sick friend about the ideal Christian

¹⁰⁶ Ambrose, *De Isaac et anima*, IV. 11, CSEL, 32. 1, p. 651, lines 9–10: 'ascendit ad illa aeterna et invisibilia, et plena miraculis, puro sensu se piaie mentis atollens'.

¹⁰⁷ Ambrose, *De mysteriis*, I. 2, CSEL, 73, p. 89, lines 9–11: 'quod inopinantibus melius se lux mysteriorum infuderit, quam si ea sermo aliqui praecurrisset'.

¹⁰⁸ As Courcelle, Review of Pellegrino, *Vita*; quoted by Lamirande, *Paulin de Milan et la Vita Ambrosii*, p. 118, n. 30.

man, now identified as having been written by the Aquitanian priest Eutropius, discusses and rebuts their doubts.¹⁰⁹ Its section defending the credibility of the new miracles by the martyrs claims to be the first (literary) treatment by anyone about this phenomenon,¹¹⁰ and as such, it deserves close inspection. The letter begins by treating the physical and spiritual elements in man and his future reformation and resurrection in heaven; then Eutropius castigates those with political and economic power who persecute the new western ascetics that imitate the eastern monks — an accusation which, as will be seen, is prominent also in Sulpicius's writings. As in Sulpicius too, the author's opposition is vehement: Eutropius writes vindictively that, in contrast to the holy ascetics, their critics will be condemned at the Judgment and not resurrected.¹¹¹ And the apostles and saints who will then help to judge them have now already become active against these 'sinners':

Indeed, we see, as we said, the saints of God flying everywhere with torches and cutting [them] down in revenge with their coruscating right hands and two-edged swords. For this is the glory of the saints of God, this the army despised in this world — this is the dissipation of all the detractors' tongues. [...] Here is the reward for being blasphemers.¹¹²

The image of the flying revenging saints resembles that of the pagan Furies; the letter indeed shows traces of a classical education.¹¹³ Its vengeful vehemence shows how the subject of miracle could lead to polarization and leads one to suspect that the writer, although passionately defending the ascetics and perhaps one himself, was not one of those living in saintly detachment.

The next section begins with the resolve to treat of the saints' merits — these, as will be seen, include miracles through their relics:

¹⁰⁹ It was included as a letter by an unnamed author among the spurious works of Jerome: *Epistola 6, Ad amicum aegrotum. De viro perfecto* [hereafter *De viro perfecto*], PL, 30, cols 75–104. The attribution to Eutropius was made by Courcelle, 'Un nouveau traité d'Eutrope'. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 274–75, regards it as replying, somewhat later, to the criticism of Vigilantius, which will be treated below. It seems to me to be closer in time to Ambrose's discovery because the questions quoted are more puzzled than the outright rejection which will be noticed in Vigilantius as quoted by Jerome.

¹¹⁰ *De viro perfecto*, 14, PL, 30, col. 96B.

¹¹¹ *De viro perfecto*, 9, PL, 30, col. 90C.

¹¹² *De viro perfecto*, 10, PL, 30, col. 91A–B: 'Cernamus utique, ut constituimus, Dei sanctos cum facibus per omnia volitare, et coruscantibus ad vindictam dextris, ancipites gladios stringere. Haec enim est gloria sanctorum Dei; haec in hoc saeculo despicabilis militia; haec linguis omnium in detractionibus dissipata. [...] Haec praemia pro nomine blasphematorum.'

¹¹³ Courcelle, 'Un nouveau traité d'Eutrope', p. 383.

For there are those who prefer to attack through criticism, rather than accept in veneration, the egregious and heavenly virtues/deeds of power (*virtutes*) through the relics of the saints now indeed already being performed in our own times. [The writer argues that it resembles the Jews' disbelief of Christ's miracles.]

For those who were stationed nearby tell us what stupid faithlessness says about the divine and most blessed deeds by Gervasius and Protasius. Some, contriving to harm Bishop Ambrose, do not fear to violate the [martyrs] with sacrilegious words, in this way seeking an explanation of the miracles. [For they ask:] from that which martyrs are, what is that through which they merit the gift of deeds of power? Why is that which was granted to them already earlier, exercised only so late? Since they did not show them in the time in which they suffered, in what way are [these deeds of power] performed now? What is that which now appears to be shown? Or did Ambrose do these greater things through a revelation, rather than [that they happened through] the dignity of the martyrs?¹¹⁴

The writer's rather precise knowledge of the doubters' questions shows their far-flung resonance, as well as the fact that, notwithstanding the antique belief in ubiquitous spiritual powers, there was still plenty of this-worldly scepticism around. Belief in magic, here perhaps hinted at by Eutropius, was still around too, as the accusation against Ambrose's hymns also shows.¹¹⁵ Significantly, Eutropius does not mention the heretics' accusation that Ambrose had staged the whole thing, but carefully points to the possibility of a divine sign through the Bishop himself. As we saw, the Bishop's biographer Paulinus too, twenty-five years after the event, would report that the possessed had cried that they were being tortured by Ambrose himself as well as by the martyrs.¹¹⁶ It must be to the doubts of Catholic Christians, then, that the writer is referring: although used to accept Christ's and the apostles' miracles in the distant past, not everyone was evidently prepared to recognize them without further ado in the present.

¹¹⁴ *De viro perfecto*, 11, PL, 30, col. 92B–C: 'Exstiterunt enim qui virtutes egregias et coelestes per sanctorum reliquias iam utique prope nostris temporibus operantes, maluerunt detractatione mordere, quam veneratione suscipere. [...] Recitabant namque nobis iuxta positis, quae divinis et beatissimis Gervasio et Protasio infidelitas stulta loquebatur, quos dum papae Ambrosio aliqui decerpere machinantur, violare sacrilegis sermonibus non timeant, hoc modo rationem miraculorum conquirit. Quid est istud, quod ex eo quod martyres sunt, virtutum dona meruerunt? Cur tam tarde, quod iam pridem illis concessum est, exercetur? Aut si ea tempestate cum passi sunt, non ostenderunt, quomodo nunc operati sunt? Quid est hoc, quod modo videntur ostendere? Aut illos maiores revelatione Ambrosius fecit, quam dignatio martyrii?'

¹¹⁵ See for instance, *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. by Mirecki and Meyer, and Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity'.

¹¹⁶ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XV. 1, line 9, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 72.

After again pointing to the Jews' malevolent questioning of Christ's miracles, Eutropius says that

it is, I think, a lukewarm comfort and born out of envy to inquire whether it is divine, to ask whether what you see is divine and require a reason for it, when what is necessary is to believe. Since the Apostle said 'Charity believes everything' [1 Corinthians 13. 7], who will doubt that they, since they do not apply their faith to the deeds of power, are without the love of God? The one who inquires, like the Tempter, denies his faith. Whence this power? As though that [power] manifested in the miracles which the holy martyrs now perform in the spirit were not the same power through which they earlier overcame their adversaries in the flesh and in their passions! Let us kick our foot against those [unbelievers], as it were, sons of the Jews [...] so that we too may glory in a double triumph through the Lord, and so that they may acknowledge the understanding of divine things in the Catholic faith, not in worldly wisdom; for as the Lord warns: 'Unless you believe, you will not understand.'¹¹⁷

This is less persuasion through recognizing events as having been foretold in the Bible, as Ambrose had done, than pointing to the 'power' of faith rather than reason, as Anthony had done, and calling upon a binding sense of community to castigate those who refuse to conform: the miracles are to be accepted by command simply as now part of its world. Judging by the passion in the writer's tone, the doubters were perceived as enemies of the faith and must have been relatively numerous and vocal. We will see Sulpicius and Jerome use a similar tone and similar arguments against critics and detractors.

'Unless you believe, you will not understand' — this is the crux of Eutropius's presentation. What kind of understanding did he have in mind? For what he is attempting to induce is not a conscious fitting of miracles into a world view — existing or about to be created — but, as he says explicitly, an abdication of inquiry upon command: a deliberate move into a non-common-sense or belief mode of awareness in which the believing of Christ's miracles in the past is already a part. Instead of seducing his readers through paradisiacal imagery around these miracles,

¹¹⁷ *De viro perfecto*, 11, PL, 30, col. 92C–D: "Tepida, ut arbitror, consolatio, et de livore generata, quaerere, an divinum sit, quod videas esse divinum et rationem poscere, cum credere sit necesse. Et cum Apostolus dicat: "caritas omnia credit", quis dubitat, quod sine charitate Dei sunt qui fidem tantis non applicuere virtutibus? Negat autem fidem, qui quasi tentator inquirat. Unde haec potestas? Quasi non manifestum sit in ea sanctos martyres nunc in spiritu miracula facere, in qua potestate adversarios suos prius in carne et in passione vicerunt. Conferamus pedem contra istos, si dici fas est, filios Iudaeorum [...] ut et nos in triumpho gemino per Dominum gloriemur; et illi agnoscant intelligentiam rerum divinarum in fide catholica, non in sapientia saeculi constitutam, monente Domino: "Nisi crederitis, non intelligetis." Cf. Isaiah 7. 9.

as the eastern orators had done in their sermons, Eutropius rather heavy-handedly presses the doubters to accept the dynamic existence of another reality which is no longer past but also now: a reality in which the power of God, theoretically accepted in belief, is expected to act discernibly in visible events according to the ancient models already known. That his treatise is in fact about power in the Church appears to be revealed when he then turns to threats: he warns that not believing these new Christian miracles to happen amounts to denying and forsaking this faith, with all its dire consequences for the future. As will be seen, Sulpicius directed the same threat at those who would not believe Martin's holiness and miracles. Perhaps some of the sceptics addressed by Eutropius were also not yet ready to accept a heavenly patron speaking and acting — irrefutably — through their bishop.

Only then does he turn to the Scriptural evidence supporting this change. First, he brings up a Jewish charge that their prophet Elisha had done some of the same miracles as the Christians' Christ, including the raising of the dead.¹¹⁸ This prophet however, the writer counters, had not acted out of his own power but through God's; it was God's power that had revived a dead man through the contact with Elisha's dead body.¹¹⁹ And this is what is now happening through the martyrs — so why not believe it?

'They ask whether or not it is divine power that now begins to appear in the martyrs.'¹²⁰ The reply: it *is* divine power. Up until the Lord's time, the prophets had foretold his miracles; after the Lord, the apostles prophesied their continuance.¹²¹ Paul had spoken of seeing divine things in part and that when the perfect came, the rest would be destroyed (1 Corinthians 13. 10, 12); thus, when the world would be about to end — the implication is that this is now close to happening, something confirmed by a later statement — neither great knowledge nor further prophecy should be sought:¹²²

up to now we are astonished at what is shown, we do not grasp what has been transmitted.
[...] [And] we confirm that that which we admire in the churches of the Lord and in the

¹¹⁸ *De viro perfecto*, 12, PL, 30, col. 93B.

¹¹⁹ *De viro perfecto*, 12, PL, 30, cols 93D–94A.

¹²⁰ *De viro perfecto*, 13, PL, 30, col. 94D: 'Quaerunt an divina virtus sit, que nunc coepit in martyribus apparere.'

¹²¹ *De viro perfecto*, 13, PL, 30, col. 95A.

¹²² *De viro perfecto*, 17, PL, 30, cols 99C and 99A–B, respectively.

cemeteries of the saints, must be believed to be done by God — if they were foretold. [...] [and the deeds] that are his, no one other than he can explain.¹²³

Adducing prophecy, Eutropius then turns to the passage in Revelation saying that the dead martyrs lie under the altar of God, calling to God to ask when their blood will be revenged on those living on earth; they are given white robes and told that they must rest for another little while until the number of the martyrs is complete.¹²⁴ The white robes are symbols of the martyrs' spiritual gifts; 'therefore what is done now does not derive from the merit they have always had, but from the power they have recently attained'.¹²⁵ Eutropius then returns to the apparently recent events in Milan:

As for what was seen in that miracle in Milan, the first to arise, and which was granted to Ambrose himself before others — who does not see that, because of the Arian perfidy, our faith was confirmed by divine testimonies? [...] But when the power of the martyrs was about to go through all the provinces [...] it was necessary to go forth first in Italy, which was dominated by the Arian infidelity. 'For signs are given not to the believers but to unbelievers' [I Corinthians 14. 23]. It was the unbelievers who asked for a sign from the Lord: the scribes and the Pharisees; the apostles were silent, believed, and followed. And therefore it is not to be wondered at that the divine power works through the tombs of the saints, that not even these remedies can cure the heretical mind so that it will at last follow the bishop whom they had seen communicating with the martyrs through his own revelation and through the dignity of their virtues/deeds of power (*virtutes*).¹²⁶

Believing or not believing the martyrs' new miracles, then, was not a question of that alone: it was either confirming or denying Bishop Ambrose's propagation of

¹²³ *De viro perfecto*, 17, PL, 30, cols 95C–96B: 'ostensa adhuc miramur, non tradita tenemus [...] sanctorumque coemeteriis admiramur, credenda esse divinitus fieri, si prophetata fuerint, comprobemus [...] quoniam quae ipsius sunt, nemo extra ipsum poterit explicare.'

¹²⁴ *De viro perfecto*, 15, PL, 30, col. 97B. Cf. Revelation 6. 9–11.

¹²⁵ *De viro perfecto*, 17, PL, 30, col. 99D: 'ideo nunc operantur, non de merito quod semper habuerunt, sed de virtute quam nuper adepti sunt'; similarly col. 100C.

¹²⁶ *De viro perfecto*, 18, PL, 30, cols 100D–101B: 'Quod autem istud miraculum Mediolani videtur primum exortum, vel bono Ambrosio proprie prae ceteris fuisse concessum, quis non videt fidem nostram propter Arianorum perfidiam divinis testimoniis approbatam? [...] Sed cum haec virtus martyrum per omnes provincias sit itura [...] necessario tamen primum in Italia processit, cui infidelitas Ariana fuerat dominata. Quoniam signa non fidelibus, sed infidelibus donata sunt. Nam a Domino, qui signum postulant, infideles sunt: scribae postulant, pharisei postulant; apostoli tacent, et credunt, et sequuntur. Et propterea non mirandum, quod divina virtus operatur per sepulcra sanctorum, quod nec his remediis potuit haeretica mens curari, ut vel tandem episcopum eum sequeretur, cui communicare martyres ipsa revelatione suarum virtutum dignatione vidissent.'

them as supporting the Catholic faith. This explains the writer's vehemence. Was Ambrose making it up when he seemed to suggest to his congregation that the martyrs were already performing miracles elsewhere in the country? For Eutropius says that the miracle in Milan was the first one to happen and that subsequent miracles spread first in Italy because the Arians there needed to be impressed and converted — miracles evidently still being regarded as necessary to those who do not (yet) believe. This implies that in Eutropius's view asking for a miracle, just as inquiring about its nature, was simply not Christian behaviour. How this would change in the decades that followed! The believing Christian, nevertheless, is to accept and believe the present, late miracles of the martyrs as foretold in Revelation and as annunciatory images of what is to come at the end of the world — perhaps already imminent, as Ambrose had hinted and Sulpicius's Martin firmly believed.

'Seven Times More Brilliant Than the Sun': Victricius of Rouen on the Healing Light in Relics

Ambrose — following the eastern custom — had given or sent particles of saints' relics to some of his colleagues in the west. Victricius of Rouen was one of these, and his sermon upon their arrival in his city is a unique reasoned exposition about how miracles can happen through relics.¹²⁷ Most of the little that is known about his life comes from a letter addressed to him by Paulinus of Nola in the summer of 398,¹²⁸ approximately two years after he had delivered the sermon which will be examined below. The two had met each other — and Martin — at Vienne in the late 380s.¹²⁹

Paulinus's letter reports that one of Victricius's clergy had told him, 'in praise not so much of you as of God's preaching in you, how great a light the Lord has

¹²⁷ Victricius of Rouen (Victricius Rotomagensis), *De laude sanctorum* [hereafter *De laude*], CCSL, 64, pp. 53–93. Text with a French translation in Herval, *Origines chrétiennes*, pp. 108–53. The sermon is analysed by Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, pp. 231–50; by Miller, 'Relics, Rhetoric and Mental Spectacles', pp. 44–50; and most recently in Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, pp. 37–39, 95–100.

¹²⁸ Paulinus of Nola (Paulinus Nolanus), *Epist.* 18, CSEL, 29, pp. 128–37. The letter is mentioned in Victricius, *De laude*, CCSL, 64, p. 55 and n. 1. See Mulders, 'Victricius van Rouaan'. See also Andrieu-Guitrancourt, 'Essai sur saint Victrice'.

¹²⁹ Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 238–39; Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 95–96.

caused to blaze forth through you in regions which were hitherto dark'.¹³⁰ When he thereupon says that the Bishop has made his city a new Jerusalem through the presence of the saints there and describes at some length how pleased they are by the praises and virtue of their hosts — also described at some length in Victricius's sermon — it looks as though he is referring to it. Turning at last to the praise of Victricius himself, his account of the Bishop's life exhibits resemblances to what will be seen to be Sulpicius's description of Martin's life, which he had received the year before. He tells us that the Bishop was born of pagan parents, perhaps in what is now Belgium or northern France, and that he learned about Christianity in the army.¹³¹ In or around 360, in an episode reminiscent of a similar deed by Martin, Victricius is said to have confessed himself a Christian and abdicated his military duty with the spectacular gesture of throwing down his arms during a parade. This desertion resulted in a beating and imprisonment by his commander, and he was handed over to be executed. At the moment, however, that the executioner was feeling for the place in Victricius's neck where he would strike the blow, his eyes were blinded.¹³² Was the blinding of the magician who opposed the apostle Paul (Acts 13. 8–11) a model here? One wonders, too, if this was what we know today as a hysterical blindness, caused by an extreme psychological resistance to carrying out an odious task.¹³³ Later, as Victricius sat waiting in prison on broken shards, praying to Christ for release from the bonds knotted so tightly that they were cutting into his flesh, these chains suddenly dropped off.¹³⁴ The incident appears to be modelled upon the apostle Peter's similar experience in prison (Acts 12. 7). For the guard recognized it as a miracle, converted on the spot and rushed to the general; the latter told the emperor, who released Victricius. What we notice here is that Paulinus is describing the Bishop with clear associations of martyrdom and sainthood, and as favoured and vindicated by God at every turn according to well-known biblical models — just as Sulpicius's *Life* had presented Martin. Victricius appears to have been Bishop of Rouen from *c.* 380 and to have died between 404

¹³⁰ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 18. 4, CSEL, 29, p. 130, line 24 – p. 131, line 2: 'non quidem te magis quam in te deum praedicans, quanta dominus per te lumina in obscuris ante regionibus accendisset'.

¹³¹ Birth: probably in 330 or later, as Victricius, *De laude*, CCSL, 64, p. 55; conversion: Mulders, 'Victricius van Rouaan' (1956), p. 7.

¹³² Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 18. 7, CSEL, 29, p. 134, lines 23–27.

¹³³ As explained by Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*, pp. 56, 59.

¹³⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 18. 7, CSEL, 29, p. 135, lines 6–9.

and 409.¹³⁵ What he did and where he was between 360 and 380 is not known. Because of certain similarities with their thinking, it has been suggested that he may have received religious instruction in Poitiers from its Bishop Hilary and, in the nearby Ligugé monastery, perhaps from Martin himself.¹³⁶ Another possibility is that he travelled to the east and became acquainted with the eastern Fathers' imaged sermons.¹³⁷

His sermon in Rouen was presented in 396, possibly on 3 December, and as is clear from its content it celebrates the arrival of a second group of relics in the city.¹³⁸ In what follows, I shall focus upon Victricius's theological explanation of the possibility of miracles through the saints' relics. For he posits a direct causal connection between the relics themselves and the miracles happening in their presence through an ontological spiritual continuum with Christ and his body; each particle of their bodies too would be infused with the fullness of God's divine powers granted to the saints and their bodies because of their Christlike passion.¹³⁹ We will follow Victricius's images around this train of thought as it develops in the course of the sermon.

The sermon begins by expressing great joy at the arrival in the city of the 'caelestis militia' (heavenly army) and says that the citizens' first request to them should be that their sins be forgiven 'pia miseratione advocacionis' (through the holy compassion of an advocate)¹⁴⁰ interceding for them with God. Is this strictly a private matter of each individual or might it point to preceding civil discord needing reconciliation? Next, Victricius presents himself as following what he designates as the martyrs' 'praecept[a]' (precepts) during his recent trip to Britain (or Brittany) to help re-establish peace there; and he describes them as spreading 'caelestis claritudo' (heavenly light) through their merits and through their being

¹³⁵ Mulders and Demeulenaere, *Préface* to Victricius, *De laude*, CCSL, 64, pp. 55–56.

¹³⁶ Mulders, 'Victricius van Rouaan' (1956), pp. 10–11.

¹³⁷ Mulders, 'Victricius van Rouaan', discusses his theology and compares it with that of his colleagues in east and west, noting that although there is no concrete evidence of any concrete contacts there seem to be echoes of the eastern Fathers' ideas. Perhaps he did travel to the east in the period in which his whereabouts are unknown.

¹³⁸ Mulders and Demeulenaere, *Préface* to Victricius, *De laude*, CCSL, 64, p. 58 and n. 20. On his welcoming the relics as the presence of the saints, see Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 98–99.

¹³⁹ John Chrysostom had said something similar in his *In martyrem Julianum*, PG, 50, cols 595–96; trans. by Mayer, p. 116.

¹⁴⁰ Victricius, *De laude*, I, lines 20–21, CCSL, 64, p. 70.

the body of Christ, in whom the Holy Spirit lives¹⁴¹ — a notion to which he later returns at length. Here he adds: 'You are the guarantors of the peace of the Lord, and have appointed me to be, as it were, your interpreter.'¹⁴² This is a crucial statement: peace appearing to be a central concern, again suggesting that there may have been civil discord, it establishes the Bishop as the direct mouthpiece of the martyrs and their heavenly power; a greater and more unfettered authority can hardly be imagined.

The next short section thanks those, including Ambrose, who sent him the relics, and then says that 'if a slight touching of the hem of Christ's robe healed, it is certain that the repositories of [the martyrs'] passions, when they are embraced, will heal'.¹⁴³ For the martyrs' re-enacting Christ's passion in their bodies unites these ontologically with that of Christ — a participation through similarity which is explained later. Next, there is a reference to the newly built church in which these just-arrived relics, as well as the ones that had come earlier, can now be installed.¹⁴⁴ And this is followed by an elaborate description of the various groups of citizens — monks, children, virgins, continent spouses, and widows, in that order — who have come to meet and greet the saints, adorned with their invisible virtues that are an 'invitatio potestatum' (invitation to [heavenly] powers [to presence themselves]);¹⁴⁵ miracles, then, happen only to those who deserve them: attraction through similarity again.

After a plea for mercy and forgiveness of the community's sins, Victricius begins to elucidate his central point: the assimilation of the martyrs and their bodies to Christ. He paraphrases the Creed's formulation of the Trinity: how its three 'persons' of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are undividedly one in divine substance, something which Hilary of Poitiers and Ambrose had also emphasized, along with the eastern Fathers.¹⁴⁶ Then Victricius explains that the martyrs' adoption into spiritual unity with Christ and infusion with the Holy Spirit, as promised to the disciples (John 14. 16–17), causes their bodies to partake of this divine substance,

¹⁴¹ Victricius, *De laude*, I, lines 35–36, CCSL, 64, p. 70.

¹⁴² Victricius, *De laude*, I, lines 37–38, CCSL, 64, p. 71: 'Pacis Domini estis auctores cuius me sententiae velut interpretem delegistis.'

¹⁴³ Victricius, *De laude*, II, lines 12–14, CCSL, 64, p. 72: 'si curavit adtacta leviter fimbria Salvatoris, procul dubio curabunt amplexata domicilia passionum'.

¹⁴⁴ Herval, *Origines chrétiennes*, p. 112.

¹⁴⁵ Victricius, *De laude*, III, line 38, CCSL, 64, p. 74.

¹⁴⁶ As Mulders, 'Victricius van Rouaan' (1957), pp. 31–33.

which has the power to heal. He adds Christ's saying that they are 'lumina mundi' (the lights of the world).¹⁴⁷

At this point there appears to be an interlude in the argument: Victricius invites his community to offer psalms to the saints and says he hopes that the 'inebriata sobrietas' (drunken soberness) — a quasi-trance state? — of their vigils and fasts, bringing the washing off of their sins, will also invite the favour of their new guests (*hospites*), who, although also living in heaven, know everyone's deepest secrets.¹⁴⁸ A rousing, almost trance-inducing, invitation follows:

You too, sacred and unviolated virgins, sing! Sing! And with [your] choirs (*choreis*) tread upon the paths that lead to heaven! Those paths, I say, that rejoice in the perpetual spring of Paradise, in bright light, with no dark clouds, rub those with your feet, pound upon them with your leaps! The compassion of the Saviour gave to us other leaders to prevent anyone from being led astray by error.¹⁴⁹

Here Victricius seems to admit that the role of the saints is to be mediators of a now distant Christ. The virgins, perhaps somewhat sheltered from contacts with others,¹⁵⁰ are warmly invited to join in: in what? In classical Latin, a 'chorea' is a ringdance to the sound of voices.¹⁵¹ The authoritative dictionary of Christian Latin gives as the classical and Christian meanings only that of a choir that sings.¹⁵² The above passage, however, invites the virgins — along with everyone else? — not only to sing but specifically to dance with their feet. The image evoked here is one that goes back to the first centuries of Christendom: that of angels dancing in heaven.¹⁵³

Is the dancing a metaphor? There is scattered evidence in this period that, notwithstanding then increasing official ecclesiastical disapproval on account of its

¹⁴⁷ Victricius, *De laude*, IV, lines 23–28, 33, CCSL, 64, p. 75. Cf. Matthew 5. 14.

¹⁴⁸ Victricius, *De laude*, V, lines 1–6, CCSL, 64, p. 76. Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVII. 105, CSEL, 30, p. 266, describing the apostles' speaking in tongues (Acts 2. 4), speaks of their spiritual state, possessed by the Holy Spirit, as *ebria corda* (cf. Acts 2. 13).

¹⁴⁹ Victricius, *De laude*, V, lines 8–13, CCSL, 64, p. 76: 'Vos quoque, sacrae inviolataeque virgines, psallite, psallite, et choreis tramites quibus ad caelum ascenditur pede pulsate. Illos, inquam qui perpetuo paradisi vere gaudent, clara luce, nullis nubibus turbidi, illos plantis terite, illos adsultibus fatigate. Ne quis autem de errore quaeratur, addidit nobis alios duces misericordia Salvatoris.' John Chrysostom also uses images of Paradise in his *In martyrem Julianum*, PG, 50, cols 672D–673B; trans. by Mayer, pp. 120–21.

¹⁵⁰ Mulders, 'Victricius van Rouaan' (1957), p. 21.

¹⁵¹ Backman, *Religious Dances*, p. 13.

¹⁵² Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, p. 148.

¹⁵³ Backman, *Religious Dances*, p. 18.

distrust of the body, dancing in a religious context had been taking place in and around churches and still did sometimes take place.¹⁵⁴ Physical movement in secular dancing, prominent at weddings, was severely frowned upon by the fifth-century Church as exhibiting and celebrating bodily desires, and as instigated by drunkenness or even ‘dementia’ (insanity).¹⁵⁵ Thus Augustine forbade the wanton (*petulan[s]*) dancing in his church that had evidently tended to take place spontaneously during the celebration of a martyr’s vigils; and he urged his community to imitate the songs in their virtuous conduct rather than in the movements of their limbs, for ‘singing [is] dancing with the mind’ (*cantan[s] [...] mente saltan[s]*).¹⁵⁶ A sermon held at Tours at least a century and a half later, however, says that Martin’s community ‘three-steps’ (*tripudiat*) with manifold exultation in the remembrance of his anniversary.¹⁵⁷ The traditional Roman ‘tripudium’ — presumably a three-step, like a waltz, perhaps with some hopping — had been a processional dance on festive occasions.¹⁵⁸ Was the people’s ‘waltz’ in Tours an actual ceremonial dance, or was it a metaphor for the inner movement of rejoicing?

For the image of the three-step was also used to describe the interior affective movement in exulting joy: the authoritative dictionary of Christian Latin does not mention physical dancing and defines ‘tripudium’ only as ‘joy, exaltation, cheerfulness’; the verb is defined as ‘being in joy (in heaven)’ and ‘celebration’.¹⁵⁹ Jerome, for instance, writes: ‘I rejoice and my soul is lifted up, as it were, in a kind of three-step.’¹⁶⁰ The movement becomes more physical, however, when he writes about what the faithful will do in Jerusalem when the Lord shall have come to live there: ‘When they shall hear the apostle saying “Rejoice, again I say to you, rejoice”, they

¹⁵⁴ Backman, *Religious Dances*, pp. 18–37. See also Hanna, ‘Dance: Dance and Religion’, pp. 2135–36; and Gougaud, ‘Danse’, cols 248–51.

¹⁵⁵ As respectively Augustine, *Contra Julianum*, v, PL, 44, col. 801, and Ambrose, *De virginibus*, III, 5, PL, 16, col. 239C.

¹⁵⁶ Augustine, *Sermo* 311. 5 and 7, PL, 38, cols 1415[D] and 1416[C].

¹⁵⁷ *Sermo in laudem sancti Martini*, I, PLS, 4, col. 602: ‘multiplici exultatione tripudiat, eius recolendo festum’. On the dating, see Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 785–86.

¹⁵⁸ *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary*, p. 589. A Roman ceremonial dance may be meant when Jerome speaks of one whom the Roman people accepted with a certain clapping and dancing (or rejoicing?), in *Epist.* 23. 3, lines 10–11, CSEL, 54, p. 213: ‘quem plausu quodam et tripudio populus romanus excepit’. Cf. Backman, *Religious Dances*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁵⁹ Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, p. 830.

¹⁶⁰ Jerome, *Epist.* 65. 2, lines 20–21, CSEL, 54, p. 618: ‘gaudeo et veluti quodam tripudio effertur animus meus’.

shall show the joy of their heart by the movement of their body, and say with David: “I shall dance and play in the presence of the Lord.”¹⁶¹ Later, Gregory of Tours was to refer to dead saints, in a tantalizingly ambiguous manner, as ‘in coelo tripudia[n]tes’ (waltz[ing]/rejoicing in heaven).¹⁶²

Peter Dronke has recently shown how dance, as an ancient metaphor expressing cosmic and divine–human relations, figured prominently in Neoplatonist writings such as those of Plotinus and was assimilated into Christian thinking.¹⁶³ We see this when Ambrose, defending Paulinus’s decision to sell his possessions and settle ‘in exile’ in Nola, compares it to King David’s ‘gloriosa sapientis saltatio’ (glorious dance of the wise man) before the Ark in honour of God.¹⁶⁴ For even Ezekiel, he says, urged the faithful to dance, and ‘these [dances] that, in their corporeal aspect, constitute shameful acts, are to be venerated with the holiest religious contemplation’.¹⁶⁵ The wise man, dancing, ‘ad tollens opera sua’ (raises up his works; cf. Matthew 5. 16), Ambrose writes, and ‘thus he [David] ascended up to the seat of Christ through the sublimity of a spiritual dance’.¹⁶⁶ In the present time, then, the dance is an interior one, for Ambrose elsewhere recommends that the Church should

similarly after many years celebrate *in the mind* the future resurrection of the Lord with the pious devotion of faith, saying: ‘sing to our God [...]’, as though he [David] were present at these wedding ceremonies of Christ and the Church, and *danced and rejoiced* in this way.¹⁶⁷ (emphasis added)

However, Dronke also noticed that the third-century Alexandrian exegete Clement appears to point to an actual practice in his time when he compares the Dionysiac mysteries with what he presents as their Christian equivalent; for there

¹⁶¹ Jerome, *Commentarius in Zachariam*, II. 8. 5, lines 127–30, CCSL, 76A, p. 809: ‘cum audierint ab apostolo: “Gaudete, iterum dico gaudete”, mentis laetitiam gestu corporis indicabunt, it tripudiant saltatu, dicent cum David: “Saltabo et ludam in conspectu Domini.”’ Cf. II Samuel 6. 21.

¹⁶² Gregory of Tours, *Virtutes sancti Juliani*, I, line 35, MGH SSRM, 1. 2, p. 583.

¹⁶³ Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, pp. 27–67.

¹⁶⁴ Ambrose, *Epist.* 6. 27. 8, line 69, CSEL, 82. 1, p. 183. Cf. II Samuel 6. 14.

¹⁶⁵ Ambrose, *Epist.* 6. 27. 6, lines 41–42, CSEL, 82. 1, p. 182: ‘haec quae corporeo aspectu fiunt turpia, sacrosanctae religionis contemplatione reverenda sunt’.

¹⁶⁶ Ambrose, *Epist.* 6. 27. 8, lines 72–73, CSEL, 82. 1, p. 183: ‘ideo usque ad sedem Christi sublimitate spiritalis saltationis ascendit’. Cf. Ezekiel 6. 11.

¹⁶⁷ Ambrose, *Explanatio psalmorum*, XXXVI. 79. 2–3, CSEL, 64, p. 133, lines 27–28, p. 134, lines 1, 2–3: ‘Mente et resurrectionem domini multo post saeculo futuram pia fidei devotione celebravit, dicens: “psallite deo nostro” [...] quasi interesset ipsis Christi et ecclesiae nuptialis copulae sacramentis, ita tripudiat et gaudet.’

he mentions Christians engaging in collective dancing accompanied by a hymnic song, urging his readers too to dance with the angels around God while Christ, the Word, joins in the singing.¹⁶⁸ And in fact, as Dronke shows, there is a lengthy passage in the apocryphal (Gnostic) Acts of John (94–96) that points to exactly such a custom as actually practised among Christians: that of a sacred round dance during the chanting of a hymn, probably of the second century, re-enacting that imputed to the apostles just before Christ's betrayal.¹⁶⁹ Christ stands in the middle and chants each sentence of a hymn that, through paradoxes, articulates the dialectics of salvation; the twelve apostles dance around him in a circle — enacting the paradoxes with bodily movements? — and answer each strophe with 'Amen'. At the end it becomes clear that Christ too has been dancing throughout the hymn, apparently making his (then future) suffering visible in his bodily movements. Thus invisible spiritual-affective movement is made visible in bodily movements. Dronke concludes: 'The dance is even more than gnosis and cosmic accord: it can express the human bond with the divine in its humanity, it can express the mystery that must be kept silent.'¹⁷⁰

It is not possible to know whether Rouen's virgins joined in an actual ceremonial dance similar to that which had been traditional for certain public occasions in pagan Rome, or whether the invitation was only to a dance of the mind and heart. Their exceptional purity is likely to have been a reason to associate their singing (if not also dancing) explicitly with Paradise. The joy in Rouen at the arrival of heavenly 'leaders' appears to stem from the hope and expectation — at least on the Bishop's part — that they would bring 'peace' and, with their guidance, resolve what may have been existing civil 'error' or discord. Like Ambrose ten years earlier, Victricius has just acquired heavenly allies, whose precepts and wishes he alone is qualified to interpret, to help him govern his then perhaps turbulent city.

After what was perhaps an interlude of communal singing that opened people's hearts to accept the mystery of what was to come, the Bishop returns to his subject: the martyrs. Addressing them, he praises their imitating Christ in their suppression of vices, ascending in the way to Christ in heaven through their virtues: prudence, justice, courage, temperance¹⁷¹ — more traditional philosophical virtues than

¹⁶⁸ Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, p. 37.

¹⁶⁹ Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, pp. 37–40.

¹⁷⁰ Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, p. 40. Kearney, *Poétique du possible*, pp. 270–72, also regards the 'ludic dance' as the symbol of the meeting of man and God.

¹⁷¹ Victricius, *De laude*, VI, lines 1–10, CCLSL, 64, pp. 76–77.

specifically Christian ones. But he again alludes to the qualities of Paradise at the far end of this ascent. His community is hereby instructed in proper Christian behaviour, also by holding out its reward. After recalling the martyrs’ fortitude during their bodily torments, he calls upon them ‘ut [...] corpora nostra purgetis’ (to purify our bodies)¹⁷² — presumably from sinful passions, then regarded as originating in the body or the flesh.¹⁷³ Thereafter the martyrs are invited to find already in the city, having arrived (not necessarily together) at an earlier time, John the Baptist, Andrew, Thomas, Gervasius, Protasius, Agricola, and Euphemia, but with whom they are said to be already united by ‘your mystery and unity of power’.¹⁷⁴ Their precepts are said to be charity, humility, and, surprisingly, not coveting the possessions of one’s neighbours; it looks, again, like a recipe for (restoring) civil harmony.¹⁷⁵

Then Victricius points to the martyrs’ spiritual unity: divinity, he says, does not admit of any degrees, contingency, or diminution. And he tells them that it does not matter that their earthly substance is dissimilar, for ‘totum est in spiritus luce commune’ (it is all one in the light of the Spirit).¹⁷⁶ What then follows, however, appears to point either to the feared assault of an invisible Devil upon the souls of his community, or to a pre-existing external, physical danger to the city. For, addressing the martyrs, he says:

But the glory of your powers will be greater if you defend those who work hard and protect those who fight against the [E]nemy. Let arms shield those who so wish: let your lines of battle, your signs, guard us! For us there is no [E]nemy if you grant us forgiveness: the threads of our life are held in your hands. Forgive our sins and no wars will trouble us.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Victricius, *De laude*, VI, lines 28–29, CCSL, 64, pp. 77–78.

¹⁷³ John Chrysostom describes a similar process of purification and refreshment through a visit to a martyr’s tomb in his *Homilia de sanctis martyribus*, PG, 50, cols 648–649; trans. by Mayer, pp. 120–21.

¹⁷⁴ Victricius, *De laude*, VI, lines 39–40, CCSL, 64, p. 78: ‘secretum vestrum et unitas potestatis’.

¹⁷⁵ Victricius, *De laude*, VI, lines 41–42, CCSL, 64, p. 78. Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 95–96, highlights Victricius’s emphasis upon solidarity and union between the Church everywhere and its saints.

¹⁷⁶ Victricius, *De laude*, VI, lines 46–47, CCSL, 64, p. 78.

¹⁷⁷ Victricius, *De laude*, VI, lines 47–52, CCSL, 64, p. 78: ‘Maior tamen erit vestrarum gloria potestatum, si defendatis laboriosos, si tueamini hostibus obiacentes. Tegant arma quos volunt; nos vestrae acies, vestra signa custodient. Nullus est hostis, si tribuatis indulgentiam peccatorum. Ex vestris manibus nostrae vitae retinacula detinentur. Remittite delicta, et nulla nos bella turbabunt.’ John Chrysostom had also imagined the martyrs as defending the city against exterior enemies in

Had there been pirate raids or civil or regional 'wars'? Or were there already indications that pointed to a possible rupture of the Rhine barrier by Germanic tribes, which would in fact occur ten years later, in the winter of 406–07?

What follows is a logical demonstration of the relics' power: if all flesh is seen to be one, as deriving from Adam, then 'it follows that, for the same reason, we believe that those living in Christ and in the Church are, by the benefit of adoption, one and the same substance of flesh, blood, and spirit'.¹⁷⁸ Through the Church's sacraments, then, as the apostle Paul had said, 'You are the body of Christ and his members, and the Holy Spirit dwells in you' (1 Corinthians 12. 27). Since, according to Scripture, baptism joins us to the Holy Spirit,

for the same reason we learn that our bodies too are joined to the members of the Son by the glue of ongoing confession and that, through grace, none of this unity can perish, how can we doubt that the apostles and martyrs have merited perfect and absolute union?¹⁷⁹

Apostles and saints, however, 'per spiritualis mysterii sanctionem' (through the decree of the spiritual mystery), by the tribute of their blood and the sacrifice of their death, have ascended to the Saviour's throne.¹⁸⁰ It follows, therefore, 'that they are wholly with the whole Saviour [...] [they] have everything in common with the truth of divinity [...] [they] participate in the eternity of the Cross'.¹⁸¹ Victricius then quotes Christ's saying in the Gospel of John to the disciples he is sending out to preach: '[I pray] that they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us [...]. The light (*clarita[s]*) which thou has given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me' (John 17. 21–23).

his *Laudatio martyrum Aegyptiorum*, PG, 50, cols 694[D]–695[A]; trans. by Mayer in *Cult of the Saints*, p. 211.

¹⁷⁸ Victricius, *De laude*, VII, lines 14–16, CCSL, 64, p. 79: 'sequitur ut in Christo et in ecclesia viventibus pari argumento unam beneficio adoptionis et carnis et sanguis et spiritus credamus esse substantiam'.

¹⁷⁹ Victricius, *De laude*, VII, lines 23–27, CCSL, 64, p. 80: 'Eademque ratione discamus etiam corpora nostra cum membris Filii glutino perseverantis confessionis adstringi nihilque unitati perire per gratiam, quae dubitatio est etiam apostolos martyresque nostros perfectam absolutamque meruisse concordiam?'

¹⁸⁰ Victricius, *De laude*, VII, lines 31–33, CCSL, 64, p. 80. Cf. Matthew 19. 28.

¹⁸¹ Victricius, *De laude*, VII, lines 37–39, 42, CCSL, 64, p. 80: 'toti sint cum toto Salvatore [...] his totum est in deitatis veritate commune [...] fiunt crucis aeternitate consortes'. John Chrysostom expresses the same notion in his *Homilia de sanctis martyribus*.

After his passion, this ‘light’ comes to inhere in the martyr’s blood — in this period, as we saw, understood to be the principle of ‘life’:¹⁸² ‘[it] becomes enflamed by the gift of divinity’.¹⁸³ Since ‘God is present everywhere and his light penetrates all without losing its substance, [...] He who is perfect in all cannot be otherwise in the apostles’.¹⁸⁴ The (dead) martyr, then, participates fully — by adoption, not by nature — in ‘the prime power and full and inexpressible substance of [the] Divinity’.¹⁸⁵ And it is this ‘light’ — a kind of holy energy — that heals.

But it also instructs: ‘Behold, the righteous, preceded, as it were, by the light of their relics, show us the path of truth’;¹⁸⁶ they teach reverence, faith, prudence, justice, fortitude, harmony, continence, and chastity, while, at the same time, they punish ‘in obsessis corporibus’ (in [our] possessed bodies)¹⁸⁷ whatever opposes these and remove the stains of vices. When they begin to judge us, they have in them this compassion, this concern to teach, as well as ‘the wealth of relics and those flaming rays of light’.¹⁸⁸ The flaming ‘light’, then, is the divine life and it inheres in the relics. Victricius compares it to the sun, shining everywhere and not being diminished, in all churches and in the hearts of all the faithful. This is the way in which God and the Saviour make themselves known and how the bodies of the saints acquire eternal splendour. For, Victricius says, ‘We learn that angels can contain the spirit of the flaming majesty by heavenly prayer’¹⁸⁹ from Psalm 103. 4 (104. 4): ‘[The Lord] who makes his angels into spirits and his ministers into flaming fire.’ The martyrs’ blood, therefore, ‘itself becomes part of the heavenly fire’.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸² On Origen’s notion of ‘the spirit of life’ as inhering in blood, see Waszink, ‘Blut’, col. 472.

¹⁸³ Victricius, *De laude*, VIII, lines 10–11, CCSL, 64, p. 81: ‘praemio divinitatis ignescit’.

¹⁸⁴ Victricius, *De laude*, VIII, lines 15–16, 17–18, CCSL, 64, p. 81: ‘Deus longe lateque diffunditur et suum lumen sine sui fenerat detrimento [...] Non potest ergo non esse in apostolis qui est perfectus in toto’.

¹⁸⁵ Victricius, *De laude*, VIII, lines 20–22, CCSL, 64, p. 82: ‘prima virtus et absoluta inenarrabilisque substantia deitatis’.

¹⁸⁶ Victricius, *De laude*, VIII, lines 25–26, CCSL, 64, p. 82: ‘Ecce nobis justī, velut praelato reliquiarum suarum lumine, tramitem veritatis ostendunt’.

¹⁸⁷ Victricius, *De laude*, VIII, line 28, CCSL, 64, p. 82.

¹⁸⁸ Victricius, *De laude*, VIII, lines 30–31, CCSL, 64, p. 82: ‘reliquiarum divitias et hos ignitos luminis radios’.

¹⁸⁹ Victricius, *De laude*, IX, lines 21–22, CCSL, 64, p. 83: ‘Angelos ignitiae maiestatis spiritum continere coelesti oratione percipimus’.

¹⁹⁰ Victricius, *De laude*, IX, lines 24, CCSL, 64, p. 83: ‘ipse superno miscetur ardori’.

The reason why a martyr's tiny relic produces an entire cure is thus that his whole body, with all its power granted by Christ, is present in that small particle. Partition, instead of diminishing, increases the boons of the saints' power, without in any way diminishing it — just as a flame shines everywhere without diminution of its brightness.¹⁹¹ The smallness of a relic, then, 'is a pointer to its perfection, not to an injury of its division'.¹⁹² The imagination of the heart must here turn sensory perception on its head. For whereas inanimate things are transitory, whatever has a spiritual beginning (*exordium spiritale*) is not:

The saints' passion is the imitation of Christ, and Christ is God. Therefore no division can be introduced in plenitude; rather, in that very division which presents itself to the eyes, the truth of plenitude is to be adored.¹⁹³

Here, a crucial distinction is made: not the relics themselves, but the divinity in the relics is to be worshipped. One wonders if Victricius's faithful maintained this fine-tuned cognitive distinction in practice.

Victricius continues: 'Why, then, do we call them relics? Because words are images and signs of things. Only blood and dust are present to our eyes.'¹⁹⁴ As already indicated, the visible 'blood' here may have been bits of tissue, presumed to be held together by, and therefore seen with the eyes of faith as, 'blood'. Victricius says that calling these remains 'relics' opens the eyes of the heart to regard them as part of a larger whole, an individual *species* of the great *genus* divinity.¹⁹⁵ The persistent light imagery returns when he says, 'Truth sees these tiny particles as brighter than the sun',¹⁹⁶ for as Christ said: 'My saints will shine like the sun in my Father's Kingdom' (Matthew 13. 43). Victricius is presenting his audience with a new perception: they are to *imagine and thereby experience* the dark bits of dust as radiating divine energy, visualized as light.

¹⁹¹ Victricius, *De laude*, IX, lines 30–45, CCSL, 64, pp. 83–84. The eastern Fathers had said the same: Mulders, 'Victricius van Rouaan' (1957), pp. 272–73.

¹⁹² Victricius, *De laude*, IX, lines 42–43, CCSL, 64, p. 84: 'admonitio perfectionis est, non divisionis iniuria'.

¹⁹³ Victricius, *De laude*, IX, lines 47–49, CCSL, 64, p. 84: 'Sanctorum autem passio imitatio Christi est, et Christus est Deus. Ergo non est in plenitudinem inserenda divisio, sed in ipsa divisione, quae oculis subiacet, plenitudinis est veritas adoranda.'

¹⁹⁴ Victricius, *De laude*, X, lines 1–2, CCSL, 64, p. 84: 'Cur igitur reliquias appellamus? Quia rerum imagines et signa sunt verba. Subicitur oculis cruor et limus.'

¹⁹⁵ Victricius, *De laude*, X, lines 1–21, CCSL, 64, pp. 84–85.

¹⁹⁶ Victricius, *De laude*, X, lines 38–39, CCSL, 64, p. 86: 'has minutias clariores esse quam sol est veritas intuetur'.

A modern American faith healer, the late Agnes Sanford, speaks very similarly of her extensive experience with the energy which she calls the *Healing Light*. Beginning with the apostle Paul's urging Christians to avoid darkness and now 'walk as children of light' (Ephesians 5. 8), she connects this, pragmatically, with the modern scientific insight that the body, like all other created things, is in fact made up of specks of energy invisible to the naked eye and that light is a form of energy:

this primal light vibrates at too high an intensity and too fine a wave length for the [unaided] human eye to see. [...] We know that we cannot see the light of [an] X-ray. Yet we know that it is more powerful than sunlight. [...] This being so, it is not strange at all that when we establish a closer connection with God through prayer we should receive [...] an increased flow of energy. The creative force that sustains us is increased within our bodies.¹⁹⁷

Elsewhere she describes this as 'a spiritual light-vibration penetrates and fills every cell of the body. [...] we are porous like a sponge and filled with God'.¹⁹⁸ And she describes sensations of heat during healing experiences that corroborate this, saying that she expects this healing energy, as a kind of electricity, to be the next form of energy that science will discover and register. Although many experiments charting the effects of these energies have been done by psychologists since she wrote this, however, I do not know of any physical scientists who have reached findings of this kind of energy through their instruments. But she also used the healing light as an image to guide and activate a patient's recovery, telling them to imagine it — even as a neon light — over the afflicted body part and at the same time firmly believe that God was healing there at that very moment.¹⁹⁹ In the cases she tells us about, this strategy yielded results. As will be seen, this strategy very much resembles that in Paulinus of Périgueux's description of his grandson's cure.

Victricius's suggestion that his audience imaginatively perceive the dusty relics as dazzling light that heals is similar in purpose. To put any remaining doubts to rest, he then insists again that this light-energy or power of healing is not less in the particles than in the whole of the martyrs' bodies, for cures by these same saints are effected in the east, at Constantinople, at Antioch, at Thessalonica, at Naisse, at Rome, and elsewhere in Italy. The saints whose relics are in Rouen are then named.²⁰⁰ Everywhere the saints 'defendunt, purgant, tuentur' (defend, purify, and

¹⁹⁷ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁹⁸ Sanford, *Healing Light*, p. 61.

¹⁹⁹ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 21–24.

²⁰⁰ Victricius, *De laude*, XI, lines 1–9, CCSL, 64, p. 86.

protect) their faithful with the same care.²⁰¹ Therefore, 'Truth herself shows her face; faith does not need reasoning [...] let us look, not seek [to discuss]'.²⁰² Look, for instance, at how the evil spirits in the possessed are invisibly tortured and bound!²⁰³ This can only be God doing it: 'He who cures, lives; and He who lives, is in the relics. For the apostles and martyrs heal and purify. In their relics therefore they are totally connected and bound to eternity.'²⁰⁴

The presence of the saints in the city is an opportunity to confess one's sins in prayer now, bowing before them and emitting deep sighs, knowing that 'adsunt advocati' (our defenders are present);²⁰⁵ they can mitigate the sentence at the Judgement. Hence, the Bishop and his community are said to feel greater joy at this triumph (*triumphus*) of the martyrs and feast (*pompa*) of their virtues than if a secular prince had visited the city. The audience is invited to imagine the martyrs: instead of a regal mantle, they wear a robe of eternal light, and their diadems sparkle with the imperishable gems of their virtues:

the blood that up to now shows the presence of the fire of the Holy Spirit in their bodies and the relics of their members, manifests these [gems] to be the illustrious entrances to eternity. Let us rejoice, most dearly beloved, whenever we see the darkness shattered by light. Why not collapse more effusively with joy when we see the beacon of salutary and eternal lights brought here? The day seems to me to take on the joy of a brighter serenity. And justly so: for, as I said, the martyrs are seven times brighter than the sun.²⁰⁶

Then Victricius warns with a great deal of military imagery that the community should pray to keep demons and vices out of their hearts, for 'Our martyrs will

²⁰¹ Victricius, *De laude*, XI, lines 16–17, CCSL, 64, p. 87.

²⁰² Victricius, *De laude*, XI, lines 25, 32–33, CCSL, 64, p. 87: 'Ipsa faciem suam veritas aperit, fides despuat argumenta [...] videnda non quaerenda'.

²⁰³ Victricius, *De laude*, XI, lines 33–38, CCSL, 64, pp. 87–88.

²⁰⁴ Victricius, *De laude*, XI, lines 48–50, CCSL, 64, p. 88: 'Qui curat et vivit; qui vivit in reliquiis est. Apostoli autem martyresque medentur et diluunt. In reliquiis igitur sunt totius vinculo aeternitatis adstricti.'

²⁰⁵ Victricius, *De laude*, XII, lines 3, CCSL, 64, p. 88.

²⁰⁶ Victricius, *De laude*, XII, lines 35–42, CCSL, 64, p. 90: 'Aeternitatis insignia edita esse etiam sanguis ostendit, qui ignem Spiritus Sancti adhuc signat in ipsis corporibus reliquiisque membrorum. Gratulamur, carissimi, quotiens videmus tenebras luce discussas. Cur non effusius in gaudia proruamus, cum cernamus salutarium aeternorumque luminum iubar adlatum? Dies mihi videtur clarioris serenitatis sumpsisse laetitiam. Nec immerito: septuplo enim, ut dixi, martyres sole sunt clariores.'

gladly turn to be with us if we offer a pure conscience to their service'.²⁰⁷ After pointing to the powers and possibilities of a strong faith, he then urges everyone to confess their sins, not because the heavenly powers are unaware of them, but because a confession may move the judge to compassion. And he urges everyone to meditate daily upon the courageous deeds of the martyrs, mentioning a number of them. Finally, Victricius refers to the church he is in the process of building for the saints and in which the relics will now be installed.

We do not know what happened after this. The fact that his sermon was later found in manuscripts also containing treatises by Ambrose may be the reason for its preservation; Mulders conjectures that Victricius sent it, expanded into a small treatise, to the Bishop to thank him for sending the relics and that in this way it ended up in his archive.²⁰⁸ We do not know if Victricius's audience was presented with the extended theological and other arguments as they are presented in the surviving, perhaps elaborated and polished, text. As a whole, it would have been a rather lengthy sermon for the uneducated to have to listen to in the excitement of the occasion. Perhaps there were other interludes of singing (and possibly ceremonial dancing), which gave the audience an opportunity to express and intensify their shared feelings, which went unmentioned in the written version.

Victricius's beginning with the forgiveness of sins and establishment of peace seems to point, alongside the condition of individuals, to a pre-existing situation of civil discord that reminds one of Ambrose's ten years earlier. His presenting himself as the only interpreter of Christian behaviour as inspired by the martyrs gives him a specific authority that was also implicit in Ambrose's words. Through Victricius, the martyrs are to bring about the religious and social reformation of the city. Not only that, they will also support their clients at the Last Judgement. To accomplish this, they need to be believed by all to be fully present and powerful, even in a tiny fragment, as united through adoption with the spirit and body of the ubiquitous heavenly Christ: this is Victricius's central point. Although theoretically deduced from abstract logical principles of genus and species, its substance may have been closer to the popular perception of relics than what will be seen to be the more generally presented view that the martyrs are no more than intercessors for the deployment of what is solely Christ's power. No other Christian writer divinizes relics so explicitly as Victricius does. He envisions their divine status and power in the recurring image of a dazzling searching and healing light.

²⁰⁷ Victricius, *De laude*, XII, lines 61–62, CCSL, 64, p. 90: 'Libenter nobiscum nostri martyres versabuntur si ad eorum famulatum puram conscientiam deferamus'.

²⁰⁸ Mulders, 'Victricius van Rouaan' (1957), pp. 19–20.

Like Eutropius, but much more persuasively with his ‘enchanting’ images, he is saying: just see this, the real Reality, with the eyes of your heart, and don’t try to look for reasons to explain something that is beyond our understanding — don’t inquire; instead, believe and mentally image the relics like this. What we see here is Geertz’s transmission of mental models in process. And Victricius adds a compelling corollary: miracles happen only to those who deserve them, those who believe and follow the martyrs’ precepts. As against the long-held traditional view that miracles are only to convert unbelievers, and that believers do not need miracles, here internal miracles of interior purification, as well as — presumably — visible ones of healing, are now actively promoted. As Ambrose had done, the Church’s government bases its authority on powerful, if invisible, heavenly teachers and judges that could be imagined as having once been fellow human beings. Victricius’s images made the invisible divine mercy, healing, and government become visible through the eyes of the imagination, and thereby accessible to the heart.

‘Faithful Companions’: Sensing the Saints’ Presence with Gaudentius of Brescia

We are fortunate in having another sermon welcoming martyrs’ relics in this period, to compare with Victricius’s. Perhaps the next year, perhaps later, Bishop Gaudentius of Brescia dedicated a new church in his city to the saints whose relics he had been given on a journey through the east.²⁰⁹ He named this church ‘concilium sanctorum’ (the gathering of the saints), a pointer to the same ideal unity which we saw Victricius emphasize.²¹⁰ As his other sermons show, Gaudentius was a competent theologian. Along with a few Latin bishops he had been sent by Emperor Honorius and Pope Innocent I to plead, as it turned out unsuccessfully, with the eastern Emperor Arcadius for the return of Constantinople’s exiled bishop, John Chrysostom. He learned of his election to the see of Brixia (Brescia) while on this mission, in 397, and accepted it only after a great deal of persuasion by Ambrose and other Italian bishops. The fact that the prefect Benivulus offered to make transcriptions of his sermons is the reason that these were preserved for posterity.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Gaudentius of Brescia (Gaudentius Brixienis), *Tractatus* [hereafter *Tract.*], XVII, CSEL, 68, pp. 141–51. See McGuire, ‘Gaudentius of Brescia’.

²¹⁰ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 37, CSEL, 68, p. 150, lines 288–89; cited and discussed in Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 95.

²¹¹ McGuire, ‘Gaudentius of Brescia’.

Unlike Victricius, Gaudentius does not go into the question of how martyrs and their relics can precipitate miracles — significantly, that appears to be taken for granted. He simply welcomed the apostles and martyrs by name and by a brief mention of their history and/or spiritual significance into his church. The forty Armenian soldier martyrs, however, probably because their story is assumed to be less known, receive a detailed description of their martyrdom.

Gaudentius begins by thanking God for the relics, for the church as their resting place, and for the company of the bishops present to show their respect upon this occasion — albeit that most of them had been prevented from coming by the 'importunitas barbarorum' (importunity of the barbarians),²¹² perhaps the Visigoths, temporarily defeated near Pollentia in 402; in 410, when they had stopped being paid to stay away, they were to invade Italy and sack Rome. Then, without further ado, Gaudentius begins to mention the names and qualities of those whose relics had arrived. First of all, the last and greatest of the prophets who had announced the coming of Christ: John the Baptist. Then the apostle Andrew, a disciple of this John, and the first disciple of Christ, who brought his brother Simon Peter with him. Third, the apostle Thomas. Instead of reproaching him for his lack of faith, Gaudentius praises him for being the one who, by his request to see and touch Christ's wounds after his resurrection — the Christ 'who, alone, is present in this world through his deeds of power'²¹³ — proves this bodily resurrection for ordinary believers 'so that we would more clearly know the truth of the Lord's resurrection'.²¹⁴ Next, the apostle Luke, who wrote a Gospel and Acts. These four apostles, Gaudentius concludes, 'showed that God forever lives through the powerful deeds of his works'.²¹⁵

After these, Gervasius, Protasius, and Nazarius are mentioned, all revealed to Ambrose in Milan, 'of whom we have *blood collected in chalk*, requiring nothing more; for we hold the blood that is the proof of their passion' (emphasis added).²¹⁶ This passage seems to prove that 'blood' was not perceived as a red fluid but as

²¹² Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 1, CSEL, 68, p. 141, line 15.

²¹³ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 8, CSEL, 68, p. 143, lines 71–72: 'solis in hoc mundo virtutibus praesens est'.

²¹⁴ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 9, CSEL, 68, p. 143, lines 77–78: 'ut evidentius nosceremus resurrectionis dominicae veritatem'.

²¹⁵ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 11, CSEL, 68, p. 144, lines 86–87: 'deo semper vivere operationum suarum virtutibus demonstrantur'.

²¹⁶ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 12, CSEL, 68, p. 144, lines 93–95: 'quorum sanguinem tenemus gypso collectum, nihil amplius requirentes; tenemus enim sanguinem, qui testis est passionis'.

colouring — reddish brown? — a solid substance. After mentioning the ashes of Sisinnius, Martyrus, and Alexander, who had been incinerated recently in Anaunia, in the north Italian diocese of Trent,²¹⁷ Gaudentius turns to the Forty Martyrs, whose personal presence in their relics he believes he has experienced in that they ‘deigned to present themselves as faithful companions during my trip, when I travelled through the cities of Cappadocia to Jerusalem’.²¹⁸ Since no one here knows their story, he will briefly narrate how they achieved their glory.

Being Christian soldiers in a region of Armenia, they refused an order to sacrifice to the ‘demons’, being the pagan gods, and were consequently tortured by being exposed, naked, to freezing temperatures in the mountains to make them change their mind. All persevered except one, who recanted and rushed to the steaming hot bath temptingly set out near them; the change was so great that he expired on the spot, losing his life as well as his eternal reward. One of the guards who watched this happen, then ‘saw the Lord of the heavenly army descending with a multitude of angels and clothing each and every one of the remaining thirty-nine martyrs with a shining robe’.²¹⁹ He was so impressed by this vision that he threw off his clothes and joined them in their gradual freezing to death, so that their number remained forty. In this way, the icy death was his baptism as well as his passion. The bodies of the deceased were then carried away to be burned. They left behind one who still seemed to be alive, in case he should still change his mind. His Christian mother, seeing this, rushed towards him and herself lifted his body on the horse (or cart), urging him to continue on the glorious road to heaven with his companions. The martyrs’ ashes, although thrown in a river to make their remains inaccessible, were gathered by pious hands and brought to the church of Caesarea: ‘hence both the church of Caesarea and our brother [there] exult and are not undeservedly glorified, understanding that the providence of God has reserved for them this healing gift’.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Delehay, *Origines du culte des martyrs*, pp. 334–35.

²¹⁸ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 14, CSEL, 68, p. 144, lines 103–05: ‘se itineri meo, cum per urbes Cappadociae Jerusalem pergerem, fideles comites praeberere dignati sunt’.

²¹⁹ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 27, CSEL, 68, p. 148, lines 227–30: ‘videt ducem coelestis militiae descendentem cum multitudo angelorum, et fortissimis bellatoribus claras vestes, atque opima singillatim praemia erogantem’.

²²⁰ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 34, CSEL, 68, p. 150, lines 270–72: ‘hinc et Ecclesia Caesariensis exultat, et nostra fraternitas non immerito gloriatur, reservatum sibi providentia Dei salutare munus intelligens’.

When Gaudentius then turns to the present situation, he explains the part of the relics as being the same in power as the whole not, as Victricius, by adducing logical categories but by assimilating them to a Gospel miracle:

We were given a part of the relics, and trust that we possess nothing less [than the whole] when we honour them by embracing, in their ashes, all forty of them: for when that woman in the Gospel was healed by the seam of Christ's robe, she held its border and demanded (*exegit*) the power of divinity; the faith of the believer attracted (*traxit*) the cure through touching the fringe, and she received the health which she had firmly expected (*praesumpserat*) she would [Matthew 9. 20–22]. Therefore, the part which we deserved to receive is [the same as] the whole. In no way can forty martyrs, who are inseparable in undifferentiated relics, be divided. For just as that fiery Spirit of God joins their souls in the unity of a saving faith, and 'there was only one heart and one soul in all believers' [Acts 4. 32], so the burning fire reduced their bodies into one body of ashes.²²¹

The notions of faith 'demanding', of 'attracting' a cure through touch, and of expecting to receive what is firmly believed will be seen to recur in the stories to be examined. And the theme of the unity of the martyrs is again stressed.²²² The 'fiery spirit of God' reminds of Victricius's sermon; did Gaudentius know it, perhaps through Ambrose? After dedicating the new church to the whole company of the martyrs, Gaudentius concludes:

Aided, therefore, by the patronage of so many righteous men, in total faith and whole-hearted desire, we the supplicants rush to [prostrate ourselves at] their feet, so that through their intercession we may merit to attain all that we pray for — praising God Christ, the dispenser of so great a gift, to whom all honour, power and, glory, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.²²³

²²¹ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 35, CSEL, 68, p. 150, lines 272–85: 'Portionem reliquiarum sumpsimus, et nihil nos minus possidere confidimus, dum totos Quadraginta in suis favillis venerantes amplectimur, sicut illa in evangelio fidelis mulier quae per fimbriam Christi salvata est, oram tenuit vestimenti, et virtutem divinitatis exegit, attactu fimbriae medelam credenti fides traxit et salutem, quam praesumpserat, adquisivit. Itaque pars ipsa, quam meruimus, plenitudo est; dividi enim Quadraginta isti martyres ab invicem nullo modo possunt, quorum sunt inseparabiles et indiscretae reliquiae. Nam sicut animas eorum igneus ille spiritus dei salutaris fidei unitate coniunxit — *erat enim omnium credentium cor unum et anima* — ita etiam membra eorum concremans ignis in unum favillae corpus redegit.'

²²² As also Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 95–96.

²²³ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, XVII. 38, CSEL, 68, pp. 150–51, lines 292–98: 'Tot igitur iustorum patrocinio adiuvandi tota fide omnique desiderio supplices ad eorum vestigia concurramus, ut ipsis intercedentibus universa, quae poscimus, adipisci mereamur magnificantes Christum deum tanti muneris largitorem, cui omnis honor, virtus et gloria cum Patre et cum spiritu sancto.'

Here, then, Christ is said to grant the miracles upon the intercession of the martyrs in heaven. Their patronage through attending to petitions addressed to the relics is taken for granted. Presumably stored in a small vessel or wrapped in a precious cloth, as we will see Vigilantius say,²²⁴ they were nevertheless, like Thomas's touching of Christ's wounds, visible and palpable evidence representing the risen heavenly Christ's protecting and healing presence, and may have inspired a hope of stability in uncertain times.

'We Should Believe as the Apostles Then Believed': Seeing and Not Believing in Turin?

Another north Italian collection of sermons in this period, however, appears to show that there could at the same time be serious doubts and resistances to the new cult within what may have been a young Christian community there.²²⁵ Maximus of Turin, perhaps of Aquileian origin,²²⁶ is the first known bishop in that city; his episcopate is judged to have comprised the years 390–408/23.²²⁷ In his more than a hundred extant short sermons he is seen attempting to ground his community in basic Christian doctrine and practice, admonishing them on the subjects of pagan customs, lax morals, and neglect of almsgiving. Two sermons, for instance, argue against incantations to the moon, and others urge doing everything with the sign of the Cross, as representing the spiritual structure of the world, presumably instead of with magical incantations;²²⁸ two complain about the celebration of the pagan Kalends of January, and two others about ceremonies and practices around idols which should be removed.²²⁹ In still other sermons we learn that many did not come to receive the Eucharist and that during the Bishop's temporary absence the clergy as well as the parishioners had stayed away from church.²³⁰

²²⁴ Jerome, *Contra Vigilantium* [hereafter *C. Vig.*], 4, PL, 23, col. 357B.

²²⁵ Maximus of Turin (Maximus Taurinensis), *Sermones*, CCSL, 23.

²²⁶ Merkt, *Maximus I. von Turin*, pp. 285–87.

²²⁷ Mutzenbecher, in Maximus, *Sermones*, CCSL, 23, pp. xxix–xxxvi.

²²⁸ Maximus, *Sermones*, XXX, XXXI and XXXVIII, LXXIII, respectively, CCSL, 23, pp. 116–19, 120–23, 148–51, 304–07.

²²⁹ Maximus, *Sermones*, LXIII, XCVIII and CVI, CVII, respectively, CCSL, 23, pp. 265–67, 389–92, 416–18, 419–21.

²³⁰ Maximus, *Sermones*, XXIII and LXXIX, respectively, CCSL, 23, pp. 90–91, 326–28.

Attempting to counter the fear of possible barbarian attacks, Maximus cites the example of Elisha’s having overcome worldly armies through prayer and holy living that brought angelic ones to come to his aid, telling his people that their weapons are Christ’s precepts and the fear of God. Fasting thus shields better than a wall, compassion liberates more easily than rapine, and ‘oratio longius vulnerat quam sagitta’ (prayer wounds [an enemy] at a greater distance than an arrow)²³¹ — the latter sounds more like a curse. In the next sermon, Maximus expresses the same underlying notion in spiritual terms: ‘Why wonder at [Elisha’s] meriting help from heaven since his soul was always in heaven [...]. For the style of life connects those whom the elements separate [...]. [And] wicked morals are stronger opponents than dangerous enemies.’²³² Here again we see that similarity in form is perceived as bringing mind and matter together without there being a causal nexus. In contrast to Ambrose’s sermon in 386, there is no mention of a similar defence through intercession by martyrs here. It has been tentatively suggested that these sermons may have been delivered during the early fifth-century barbarian incursions into Italy, and that there are — understandably — traces of apocalyptic thinking in them.²³³

In some of Maximus’s other sermons, however, the martyrs — sometimes named, sometimes in general — are remembered on their birthdays (into heaven, *diei natales*) and are held up as models for Christian living. Thus,

even if the holy martyrs are silent with their voice, we are taught by the power of their deeds; even if they are silent with their tongue, they persuade through the passion of their martyrdom. [...] That which is heard soon disappears into oblivion; the history of the eyes, however, is seen forever. For who does not perceive in every hour and every moment [with the eyes of faith] how the blessed martyrs then underwent various tortures and somehow triumphed over these punishments?²³⁴

²³¹ Maximus, *Sermo* LXXXIII. 1, line 20, CCSL, 23, p. 339.

²³² Maximus, *Sermo* LXXXIV. 1, lines 6–9, 15–16, 28–29, CCSL, 23, p. 343: ‘Quid enim mirum si is auxilia meretur e caelo, cuius animus semper in caelo est [...]. Conversatio enim conectit quos separat elementum. [...] graviores inimici sunt pravi mores quam hostes infesti.’

²³³ Merkt, *Maximus I. von Turin*, pp. 47–53. Maximus, *Sermo* LXXXV. 1, lines 5–16, CCSL, 23, p. 348.

²³⁴ Maximus, *Sermo* XVI. 2, lines 22–33, CCSL, 23, p. 60: ‘Denique sancti martyres etsi voce tacent, factorum virtute nos edocent; etsi lingua silent, martyrii passione persuadent. Unde quamvis disertus orator facundia sua me doceat, id tamen quod utile est mihi melius disco exemplo sanctorum quam adsertione verborum. Citius mihi persuadent oculi quod cernunt, quam auris potest insinuare quod praeterit. Auditui enim cito inrepat oblivio, oculorum autem historia semper inspicitur. Quis enim non omnibus horis momentisque conspiciat, quemadmodum tunc beati

Does this seeing 'in every hour and every moment' mean that Maximus's sermons went into great detail about the martyrs' passions? And that this, as elsewhere, was supposed to trigger spiritual purification? Perhaps held on All Saints' day, the following sermon presents a concise statement of the most essential elements of the martyr cult as well as a fact not mentioned in any of Maximus's other extant sermons. Here he stresses the special, the ancestral family or blood, bond, as it were, of the local martyrs whose relics the city possesses with the members of his church, probably buried nearby or in its building; is he consciously creating associations with the former Roman ancestor veneration?²³⁵ He tells them that they died to save their descendants from their sins and 'will help us with their prayers, whereas the others help us by [the example of] their passion'.²³⁶ They protect during this life and receive those who leave it so that they do not go to hell.²³⁷ Even now, however,

we certainly see them reigning already here. We see them frequently liberating men possessed by unclean spirits, so that by the heavenly medicine the captive soul is snatched from the diabolical chains, and the Devil himself, bound with fiery chains, is made to come forth captive from his own captivity; he who had just before taken a prey, was himself taken a prey. That these and other even more powerful miracles are performed through the saints is known to all. And therefore, brothers, let us venerate those in the world whom we can have as defenders in the future; and just as we are joined to them through the bones of our ancestors, let us similarly be joined to them through the imitation of their faith. In nothing, then, can we be separated from them if we join ourselves to them in religion as well as in body.²³⁸

Exorcisms and other miracles, then, are said to be already happening through these relics. If 'the imitation of their faith' meant continually visualizing the martyrs'

martyres propter nomen Christi diversis subiacuere suppliciis et de ipsis poenis quodammodo triumphabant?

²³⁵ See Dessau, 'Lares', and Geffcken, *Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism*, p. 172. Cf. Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 61–62.

²³⁶ Maximus, *Sermo* XII. 1, 2, lines 28–29, CCSL, 23, p. 41: 'nos orationibus adiuvant, isti etiam adiuvant passione'.

²³⁷ Maximus, *Sermo* XII. 2, lines 30–33, CCSL, 23, p. 41.

²³⁸ Maximus, *Sermo* XII. 2, lines 43–55, CCSL, 23, p. 42: 'Nam videmus eos hic utique iam regnare. Cernimus enim ab his frequenter obsessos inmundissimis daemonibus homines liberari, ita ut caelesti medicina et captiva anima de diaboli laqueis eruatur, et ipse diabolus vinculis igneis alligatus producatur de sua captivitate captivus, ut qui praedam paulo ante ceperat ipse susbatur in praedam. Haec et alia potiora mirabilia per sanctos fieri omnibus notum est. Et ideo, fratres, veneremur eos in saeculo quos defensores habere possimus in futuro; et sicut eis ossibus parentum nostrorum iungimur, ita et eis fidei imitatione iungamur. In nullo enim ab ipsis separari poterimus, si sociemur illis tam religione quam corpore.'

tortures and attempting to access the faith that had transformed their consciousness, the combination would be an instance of Brown's transformational model precipitating a cure. The Bishop has most to say, however, about the martyrs as intercessors, not as models of faith for imitation. Exorcisms and miracles occurring at martyrs' graves, he says, were 'known to all'. Yet he evidently still needs to do quite a bit of persuading about the martyrs' benefits. Were these local graves of the citizens' ancestors recently identified as being martyrs perhaps by a bishop or bishops before Maximus? If so, the fact that Maximus, in contrast to Gaudentius, still has to remind people about their powers appears to indicate that, in Turin at least, their cult was not something that fell naturally into place. Were the names and passions of these ancestors not fully known, or were they recounted in a now lost sermon?

In two other sermons, there are indications that not everyone in town was convinced of the martyrs' powers. Reminding them of Christ's first miracle, turning water into wine at Cana, and the disciples' thereby believing in him, Maximus — surprisingly — urges his community to respond likewise to the contemporary miracles they are said to be seeing:

what I said we only once saw happening, we [now] see plainly and we see it happening every day. For these are Christ's miracles, that do not diminish with age but gain strength through grace; they are not buried in oblivion, but renewed through deeds of power (*virtutes*). With the power of God nothing is abolished or passed over. [...] If all time of the ages is as one day to the Lord, on the same day that the Saviour worked miracles for our fathers, he works them for us. Therefore we, just as our ancestors, see the miracles of the Lord, and just like them we see these [miracles] with stunned amazement. [...]

Therefore we ought to do what our ancestors did when they saw this sign. For if the same grace of divinity shines upon us, there ought to be the same devotion of faith among us. [...] We must believe as the apostles then believed. [...] Real believing, however, is not a matter of speaking or of the tongue, but of the heart.²³⁹

In Turin, evidently, the concept of contemporary miracle has not yet crystallized and received its place in the view of self and world. The next sermon, perhaps held

²³⁹ Maximus, *Sermo* CII. 2–3, lines 13–19, 21–24, 27–32, 34–35, CCSL, 23, pp. 406–07: 'Quod autem dixi vidisse nos modo quod olim gestum est, vidimus plane videmusque cotidie. Ea enim sunt Christi mirabilia, ut non antiquitate praetereant sed gratia convalescant; non oblivione sepeliantur sed virtutibus innoventur. Apud potentiam enim dei nihil est abolitum nihil praeteritum [...] Quod si omne saeculorum tempus una dies est domino, eadem die, qua mirabilia salvator patribus operatus est, operatus et nobis est. Vidimus igitur et nos sicut maiores nostri mirabilia domini, cum pari ea cum illis stupore suspeximus. [...] Debemus ergo facere viso signo domini quod nostri fecere priores. Si enim eadem in nobis divinitatis refulsit gratia, eadem et fidei apud nos debet esse devotio. [...] Credere ergo debemus sicut tunc apostoli crediderunt. [...] Sed credere opus est opere non sermone, non lingua sed corde.'

the next day, returns to the same theme — the conversion of the disciples through Christ's first miracle of transforming water into wine at Cana that should be an example to Maximus's community:

unfortunately, although the praise for them [the disciples] remains, the example does not move us. For as much later as we are to them in time, we are equally inferior to them in merit. They, having seen one sign, believed in the Lord at once; we, having received up to now so many beneficent miracles, [continue to] doubt. We doubt, I say, because we prefer the present, while we do not believe in the future; we love riches in this world, while we hesitate to accept them from Christ; we praise immoderate anger in this world, because we do not fear the retribution at the Judgement.²⁴⁰

Seeing, then, is not the same as believing — that is, accepting the Church's explanation of an event and effecting the change in attitude, lifestyle, and loyalty that this acceptance entailed. Evidently, neither the Bishop's words nor his (presumed) word-pictures of the martyrs' passions, nor even miracles themselves, had up to then persuaded some diehards. Since they are addressed in church, were these sceptics perhaps recently converted Christians in name, still reverting to age-old pagan customs in their daily lives? Maximus does not claim to speak for these martyrs or to be their delegate on earth; he points only to their deeds as inspirational models for the Christian life. Here, in any case, the martyr cult does not rise from below; it is introduced from above as an aid to conversion and, notwithstanding the fact that they are designated as ancestors, not yet entirely with success.

The indifference — or resistance? — he encountered is especially evident in another sermon, in which he says he had often thought of depriving his community of 'dominici poculi' (the Lord's cup) of the Sunday sermon, 'since your soul, with bowels sealed, does not thirstily drain it but deceptively pours it out. [...] and so the person who had left the church full returns home empty'.²⁴¹ Thus,

I fear, however, brothers, that the following Gospel passage applies to many of you: 'we sang to you and you did not dance, we lamented and you did not weep' [Matthew 11. 17]. For

²⁴⁰ Maximus, *Sermo* CIII. 3, lines 35–43, CCSL, 23, p. 410: 'illis laus sua permanet, nos exempla non permovent. Nam quanto posteriores sumus tempore tanto inferiores et merito. Illi enim viso uno signo statim domino crediderunt, nos acceptis adhuc tot beneficiorum mirabilibus dubitamus. Dubitamus, inquam, quia praesentia diligimus, dum futura non credimus; divitias amamus in saeculo, eum eas accipere cunctamur a Christo; iracundia inmoderata extollimur, dum retributionis iudicium non timemus.'

²⁴¹ Maximus, *Sermo* XLII. 1, lines 13–15, 18–19, CCSL, 23, p. 169: 'cum id anima vestra clausis visceribus non tam sitienter hauriat quam dissimulanter effundat. [...] et ita domum vacuus repedit qui de ecclesia onustus exierat'.

we announce to you the joy of the heavenly kingdom, yet your hearts are not moved by eagerness.²⁴²

Then Maximus invites his audience to a spiritual dance:

the Lord requires a dance from us, not indeed the movement of a twisting body but the holiness of an exulting faith. Just as he who dances with his body is suspended in the air, falls to the ground, and looks with different steps at various places, just so is he who dances spiritually through faith lifted into the heights of the air, now rises to the farther stars, now looks at the heaven of Paradise through the diverse dances of his thoughts.²⁴³

In this period, the pre-eminent occasion for dancing was a wedding, and it was often accompanied by drunkenness. Maximus explicitly transforms this into a spiritual metaphor, saying that ‘we too have wedding feasts, in which we ought to dance and sing’.²⁴⁴ And he urges his community to dance spiritually in celebration of the nuptials of Christ with the Church, as symbolized in his converting water into wine at the wedding in Cana, and just as David had once done upon the arrival of the Ark in Jerusalem — an image that, as we saw, occurs also in Ambrose’s sermons.²⁴⁵ Maximus, then, was urging his people to exult, not, as we saw Victricius doing, leading them in an already existing more or less spontaneous exultation. Was the Turinians’ habit of depending upon pagan apotropaic rituals — and/or their resistance to the bishop’s authority and all that this entailed — perhaps still too strong for them to accept the new martyrs’ miracles? A later sermon shows Maximus, with a great deal of ‘enchanting’ imagery, attempting to persuade his apparently rather unwilling audience that the earth’s fertility was connected to Christ — rather than, perhaps, to their traditional spirits or gods.²⁴⁶

²⁴² Maximus, *Sermo* XLII. 4, lines 79–86, CCSL, 23, p. 171: ‘Vereor autem, fratres, ne haec evangelica lectio plerisque de vestris congruat quae ait: “cantavimus vobis et non saltastis, lamentavimus et non plorastis”. Adnuntiamus enim vobis regni caelestis gaudium, et minime corda vestra motu quodam alacritatis exultant.’

²⁴³ Maximus, *Sermo* XLII. 4, lines 79–86, CCSL, 23, p. 171: ‘Saltationem ergo a nobis requirit dominus, non utique sinuosi volubilitatem corporis, sed extollentis se fidei sanctitatem. Sicut enim qui corporaliter saltat nunc in aere suspenditur, nunc ad altiora iactatur, nunc alternis saltibus loca diversa conflustrat, ita et qui spiritaliter saltat interveniente fide modo in aeris sublimitate erigitur, modo ad siderum altiora sustollitur, modo diversis cogitationum saltibus paradysum caelumque conflustrat.’

²⁴⁴ Maximus, *Sermo* XLII. 5, lines 91–92, CCSL, 23, p. 171: ‘et nos habemus votivas nuptias, in quibus saltare vel canere debeamus’.

²⁴⁵ Maximus, *Sermo* XLII. 5, lines 94–97, CCSL, 23, p. 171. Cf. II Samuel 6. 14.

²⁴⁶ Maximus, *Sermo* LVI. 1, CCSL, 23, pp. 224–25.

'I Shall Be Cleansed by the Brightness of your Gracious Face': Prudentius on Spiritual Purification

Victricius's theme of spiritual purification through empathizing with the martyrs' heroism appears more explicitly in fourteen 'ballads', written around 405 by the Spanish poet Prudentius, that celebrate the former spiritual heroics and present benefits of western martyrs.²⁴⁷ After a secular career in the imperial administration, Prudentius retired to the town of Calagurris in north-eastern Spain to lead a life of ascetic contemplation and literary activity in the service of the Christian faith, hoping thereby to deserve salvation.

If the veneration of the martyrs, especially in ascetic circles, came to be accompanied by a need to imagine and remember their supreme sacrifices in specific ways, Prudentius's *Crowns of Martyrdom* (*Peristefanon*) responded to this need. His poems make them, now regarded as intercessors who are present in their remains as well as in the heavenly court, come alive in the contemporary Christianized Roman Empire. At the same time, his intentionally graphic descriptions seem to let the martyrs' spiritual triumphs over their bodies function as inspirational models for spiritual imitation in the practice of present-day ascetics. In every case, the martyrs are said to have transcended their bodies, singing and smiling during their torture, overjoyed and not feeling pain because, in spirit, they were already with Christ in Paradise. The enthusiastically described examples silently invite the reader/listener similarly to transcend his body and the physical world in a kind of purification that accessed communion with the saint and with Christ.²⁴⁸ As far as I can see, there is no indication or even a hint that the author also intended this induced empathy with the martyrs overcoming their exquisite tortures and defeating embodied evil to be a model for his contemporaries' *physical* purification or expulsion of (possibly demonically caused) illness in a miraculous cure. This does not mean, of course, that his readers could not have done this on their own.

For according to Prudentius the martyrs, although also in heaven, have returned to be spiritually present through their remains in the places where they suffered — now, however, to help and heal those who venerate them and offer pure, acceptable

²⁴⁷ See Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*.

²⁴⁸ John Chrysostom also describes a purificatory process but as a refreshment when sensing the martyr's presence at his tomb in his *Homilia de sanctis martyribus*, PG, 50, cols 648–49; trans. in Mayer, *Chrysostom*, pp. 217–26.

prayers.²⁴⁹ Although Prudentius speaks of God and Christ as Light,²⁵⁰ he does not extend it to the martyrs or their remains. Like Victricius, however, Prudentius says that the martyrs can intercede at the Last Judgement.²⁵¹ He describes, approvingly, believers praying for this intercession by bowing down in prayer, weeping, and kissing the tomb, and pouring balsam through an aperture in it.²⁵² As in Victricius’s sermon too, a martyr’s feast is an intense popular rejoicing; for that of the apostles Peter and Paul, ‘Romam per omnem cursitant ovantque’ (everyone is running about and exulting, all over Rome).²⁵³

Prudentius does not mention as such any contemporary miracles of the martyrs he praises, but their experienced protection can be something close to it. Thus he tells us that on his way to Rome he had bowed before the martyr Cassian’s tomb over which was painted a picture of his martyrdom: bleeding to death while being pricked by his pupils’ pens.²⁵⁴ Thinking of all his own ‘wounds’ — understood to be sins — as distresses and stinging pains, he seemed to assimilate himself to the pictured martyr as he

clasped the tomb and shedding tears, warming the altar with my lips, the stone with my breast. Then I reviewed all my private distresses, and murmured my desires and fears, with a prayer for the home I had left behind me in the uncertainty of fortune, and my hope, now faltering, of happiness to come. I was heard. I visited Rome, and found all things turning out happily. I returned home and now proclaim the praise of Cassian.²⁵⁵

The martyr, then, is not only one with whom one can empathize in spiritual purification but potentially also a heavenly guide and helper who is more visualizable and approachable than the majestic heavenly Christ or God.

²⁴⁹ Prudentius (Aurelius Prudentius Clemens), *Peristefanon*, II. 547–48, I. 16–20, IX. 97–98, CCSL, 126, pp. 276, 252, 329, respectively.

²⁵⁰ Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, I. 87, II. 393–96, X. 318–20, CCSL, 126, pp. 254, 270, 341, respectively.

²⁵¹ Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, V. 545–48, CCSL, 126, pp. 312–13.

²⁵² Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, XI. 193–94, CCSL, 126, p. 376.

²⁵³ Respectively, Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, XII. 1 and XII. 2, CCSL, 126, both on p. 379.

²⁵⁴ Cf. on this Miller, ‘Relics, Rhetoric and Mental Spectacles’, pp. 39–40.

²⁵⁵ Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, IX. 99–106, CCSL, 126, p. 329: ‘pareo, conplector tumulum, lacrimas quoque fundo, | altar tepescit ore, saxum pectore. | tunc arcana mei percenseo cuncta laboris, | tunc quod petebam, quod timebam murmuro. | et post terga domum dubia sorte relictam | et spem futuri forte nutantem boni. | audior, urbem adeo, dextris successibus utor: | domum revertor, Cassianum praedico’.

What a martyr may have meant to Prudentius even more intimately, however, appears in what he says to Rome's virgin martyr Agnes:

O happy virgin! O new glory! Noble dweller of heaven's heights! Turn [the pure light of] your face with your twin diadems [of virginity and martyrdom] upon the mixed filth of my sins. [...] I shall be purified by the brightness (*fulgor*) of your gracious face if you will fill my heart.²⁵⁶

Here, not re-enacted suffering, but an image of the young saint's girlish face shining in innocent purity — ostensibly 'found' in his imagination — is thought to induce his heart to empathize with, and thereby to conform to, its innocence. Its deeper levels of meaning become clearer when we look at what he tells us about the martyr Lawrence's face as he was about to be roasted on a grid:

His face shone with beauty and he was surrounded with a blaze [of glory] (*fulgor*). Such was the face of the bearer of the Law when he came down from the mountain. [...] Such glory (*gloria*) too did Stephen's coruscating face exhibit when he looked upon the open heavens while being stoned. [...] Thus [we see that] God is an everlasting fire (*ignis*), for Christ is the true fire; it is he who fills the just with light (*lumen*) and burns the guilty.²⁵⁷

Light is divine and purifies. The saint's heavenly face is now evidently being discovered as a central image; attended to as human, its radiance can also be experienced as inducing a healing purification.²⁵⁸ The latter returns in a different sense, however, in Prudentius's view that the martyrs' sacrifice and their bodies 'purify' from demons the cities where they were martyred and now rest — a notion that resembles an earlier one of Origen's.²⁵⁹ In that case, the heavenly fire 'burns'.

²⁵⁶ Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, XIV. 124–27, 130–31, CCSL, 126, p. 389: 'O virgo felix, o nova gloria, | caelestis arcis nobilis incola, | intende nostris conlutionibus | vultum gemello cum diademate, [...] purgabor oris propitiabilis | fulgore, nostrum si iecur inpleas.' Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', p. 32, notes that faces in apparitions tend to be young.

²⁵⁷ Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, II. 361–64, 369–72, 393–96, CCSL, 126, pp. 269–70: 'illi os decore splenduit | fulgorque circumfusus est. | talem revertens legifer | de mone vultum detulit [...] talemque et ille praetulit | oris corusci gloriam | Stephanus per imbrem saxeam | caelos apertos intuens. [...] sic ignis aeternus Deus, | nam Christus ignis verus est; | is ipse complet lumine | iustos et urit noxios.' Cf. Exodus 34. 29–30, Acts 7. 55; the Acts passage does not mention his face.

²⁵⁸ In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, XI. 3–4, ed. and trans. by Hanson, pp. 294–98, a vision of the stunningly beautiful goddess is the beginning of the narrator's cure of his affliction.

²⁵⁹ Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, IV. 65–68, CCSL, 126, p. 288. Cf. Petruccione, 'Martyr Death as Sacrifice'.

'Who Knows What Kind of Dust': Jerome Answers Vigilantius as the Voice of Resistance

There were some Christians, however, who felt that the new enthusiasm around the martyrs' shrines was taking on forms that compromised what had always been the central principles of the faith. Not much is known for certain about the one whose message has come down to us most clearly: Vigilantius, a native of Calagurris near Convenae (Comminges) in Aquitaine. Son of an innkeeper, he may have been the Vigilantius who was sent by Sulpicius Severus to Martin's monastery of Marmoutiers, and then to Nola. In any case, he is the one who was sent by Paulinus from there to the Holy Land in 395 with money for the support of the monastic communities of his relative Melania and his friends Rufinus and Jerome.²⁶⁰ At that time, however, there was a violent quarrel between Jerome and John, the Bishop of Jerusalem, who was allied with others who accused Jerome — a great admirer and translator of Origen — of what the Church had suddenly decided was the 'heresy' of the influential third-century Church Father. Although Vigilantius stayed only briefly at Jerome's monastery, he appears to have become involved in their intrigues and later, back in Italy, published a tract accusing him of this 'heresy'.²⁶¹ Jerome replied to this by a letter to him in 396 saying that he had always distinguished between accepted and non-accepted opinions of the great exegete and accusing his addressee not only of want of culture and knowledge, but also of having an unsettled brain (*vecordia*).²⁶² Jerome's disdain for his accuser is likely to have acquired an even sharper edge through what he mentions as an awkward incident during Vigilantius's brief stay at his monastery, in which the latter embarrassed himself and everyone.²⁶³

In 404, however, Riparius, a priest in southern Gaul, wrote to Jerome that a certain Vigilantius was preaching there, apparently with the consent of his bishop, against the cult of relics and the abuses — such as erotic adventures under cover of

²⁶⁰ This and the following from Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 53, 301–07, and Lizop, *Les Convenae et les Consoranni*, pp. 348–58. Cf. Brochet, *Saint Jérôme et ses ennemis*, p. 429.

²⁶¹ Brochet, *Saint Jérôme et ses ennemis*, pp. 127–29.

²⁶² Jerome, *Epist.* 61. 3. 4, CSEL, 54, p. 580, line 11.

²⁶³ According to Jerome, when an earthquake during the night suddenly roused the inhabitants to engage in collective prayer, Vigilantius appeared and prayed naked: *C. Vig.*, 11, PL, 23, col. 364B–C.

darkness — in the new practice of vigils for them. In a perhaps hasty reply,²⁶⁴ Jerome adduces many biblical quotations to support wakeful watching for the Lord, but does not say how to avoid the obvious abuses. And he counters what appears to have been Vigilantius's objection to the 'worship' of martyrs by saying that only the Creator is worshipped and not the martyrs, precious though they are in the Lord's sight. Further, he refutes Vigilantius's traditionally Roman as well as Jewish argument that dead bodies pollute by pointing to the reverent treatment of Moses's and other patriarchs' bodies: did not the contact with Elisha's bones precipitate someone's resurrection? He concludes by asking Riparius for more complete information on Vigilantius's views and copies of his treatises so that he can write a fuller refutation.

These writings — unfortunately not extant, so that they cannot be compared with what looks like Jerome's exaggerated, sarcastic presentation of them — were delivered two years later in 406 by Sisinnius, who was also carrying alms to the monastic establishments in the east.²⁶⁵ Jerome's reply, the treatise known as *Against Vigilantius*,²⁶⁶ is also addressed — or so it says — to the uneducated in Riparius's parish; Jerome says rather disparagingly that he writes 'for the sake of laymen and little women, laden with sins, ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of truth'.²⁶⁷ Evidently exasperated at the perception of being attacked again, this time indirectly, for his religious practices, Jerome here does not refute Vigilantius's criticisms with theological arguments but makes them and their proponent ridiculous, addressing him as *Dormitantius* (Sleeper),²⁶⁸ and designating his mostly practical criticisms of the new Church practices as 'blasphemy' and 'heterodoxy'.

Starting from what appears to be an adherence to the ideas and practices of the original apostolic Church, one part of Vigilantius's criticism concerned the new conception of the perfect Christian life as a retreat from the world and its responsibilities — the mode of life upon which Jerome had built his identity and his career.²⁶⁹ He also asserted that the clergy had no need to be celibate to carry out

²⁶⁴ Jerome, *Epist.* 109, CSEL, 55, pp. 351–56.

²⁶⁵ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 274; and Crouzel, 'Saint Jérôme et ses amis toulousains'.

²⁶⁶ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, PL, 23, cols 353–68.

²⁶⁷ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 3, PL, 23, col. 356C: 'propter homines saeculi et mulierculas oneratas peccatis, semper discentes et nunquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes'.

²⁶⁸ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 1, PL, 23, col. 355A, and often.

²⁶⁹ On Jerome, see Kelly, *Jerome*; on Vigilantius, pp. 286–90.

their Christian duties and that this only made life more difficult for them,²⁷⁰ that monasticism’s all-at-once abdication of possessions was impractical, and also that the latter’s claim upon money from elsewhere deprived the more needy local poor of their sustenance²⁷¹ — practical criticisms not devoid of sense.

The other part of Vigilantius’s criticism, concerning the new cult of relics and its miracles, is of direct relevance to our theme. Instead of the hesitation and puzzlement about miracles that seem to be reflected in Eutropius’s treatise, what we see in the quotes and paraphrases of Vigilantius’s writings which Jerome includes in his withering tract is conservatism: a common-sense scepticism about new practices that have disadvantages for the traditional Christian faith which, however, may have been expressed in overly disparaging terms. Jerome designates the following ostensible quotations as ‘blasphemies’ (*blasphemiae*):

‘What need is there for you not only to pay such honour to, yes even worship, the thing, whatever it may be, which you carry about in a little vessel and venerate?’ [...]

‘Why do you kiss and worship dust wrapped in a cloth?’ [...]

‘Under the cloak of religion what we see is all but a heathen ceremony introduced into the churches: while the sun is still shining, heaps of tapers are lighted, and everywhere people worship and kiss who knows what kind of dust in a tiny vessel wrapped in a costly cloth. Great honour do men of this sort pay to the blessed martyrs, whom, they think, are to be made glorious by paltry tapers, when the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, with all the brightness of his majesty, gives them light.’²⁷²

If these quotations are literal (with Jerome’s many rhetorical inventions and flourishes, one cannot be sure), Vigilantius himself was not averse to ridicule and sarcasm. Jerome again refutes the adoration charge by pointing to the apostle Paul’s rejection of this in Acts 10. 26. Then he turns to the whatever it may be (*nescio quid*) that is being honoured or adored. Of course it is the relics of the martyrs, he writes, in whose presence demons cry out, and which emperors in the east have

²⁷⁰ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 2, PL, 23, cols 355C–356B.

²⁷¹ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 13–14, PL, 23, cols 365–66.

²⁷² Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 4, PL, 23, col. 357B: “Quid necesse est, te tante honore non solum honorare, sed etiam adorare illud nescio quid, quod in modico vasculo transferendo colis?” [...] “Quid pulverem linteamine circumdatum adorando oscularis?” [...] “Prope ritum gentilium videmus sub praetextu religionis introductum in Ecclesiis, sole adhuc fulgente, moles cereorum accendi, ut ubicunque pulvisculum nescio quod, in modico vasculo pretioso linteamine circumdatum osculantes adorant. Magnum honorem praebent huiusmodi homines beatissimis martyribus; quos putant de vilissimis cerolis illustrandos quos Agnus, qui est in medio throni cum omni fulgore maiestatis suae, illustrat.”

joyfully brought to their churches — is that a sacrilege? And since God is the Lord of the living, these relics are alive, not polluting dead bodies.²⁷³

Vigilantius's reference to the fact that the Bible tells us that martyrs are either in the bosom of Abraham or in the place of refreshment or under the altar of God, and that they cannot leave their tombs to be present where they will, is countered by the question 'Tu Deo leges pones?' (Will you lay down the law for God?).²⁷⁴ They are said to follow the Lamb wherever he goes; so if the Lamb is present everywhere, so are they.

Next, Vigilantius is said to hold that we can pray for each other while alive, but not after we are dead, especially not the martyrs because, although they cry out for the avenging of their blood (Revelation 6. 10), they have never been able to obtain their request. Jerome's answer: if apostles and martyrs can pray for others while they are alive, how much more so once they have triumphed and won their crowns? Anyway, saints are not said to be dead but 'asleep', as Lazarus is said to have been asleep.²⁷⁵ As for adducing as support (which Vigilantius apparently had done) the statement in the apocryphal book of Esdras to the effect that no one after death can pray for others, Jerome answers that one should not read books which the Church has not accepted, just as one should not read tracts by unknowns about, for instance, Manichean and Gnostic views.²⁷⁶

Next, Jerome defends the practice of lighted candles near the martyrs' remains, even if formerly practised near pagan idols, as permissible in showing honour and joy to the martyrs — especially for 'the simple-mindedness of laymen or, in any case, of religious women'.²⁷⁷ What is detested when offered to idols should be accepted when offered to martyrs, for this is done throughout the east.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, candles are also lighted when the Gospel is read, the virgins in the Gospel had their lamps lighted, and corporeal light is often (experienced as) a metaphor for the divine.²⁷⁹

²⁷³ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 5, PL, 23, cols 357C–359A.

²⁷⁴ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 6, PL, 23, col. 359B.

²⁷⁵ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 6, PL, 23, cols 359–60.

²⁷⁶ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 6, PL, 23, col. 360B–C.

²⁷⁷ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 7, PL, 23, col. 361A: 'simplicitatem saecularium hominum vel certe religiosarum feminarum'.

²⁷⁸ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 7, PL, 23, col. 361C.

²⁷⁹ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 7, PL, 23, col. 361C.

Instead of offering a theology of relics, as Victricius had done, or recognizing them as conduits for the miracles promised to the apostles, as Ambrose had done, Jerome thus rebuts Vigilantius's charges with rhetoric and invective and, like Eutropius, with pressure to support and conform to the now (he implies) universally accepted views and practices:

Does the Bishop of Rome do wrong when he offers sacrifices to the Lord over the venerable bones of the dead men Peter and Paul, as we should say, but according to you, over a worthless bit of dust. [...] defiling all else [and church buildings therefore] like the sepulchres of the Pharisees, whitened without, while within they have filthy remains? [...] [And do you say that] the souls of the martyrs love their ashes, and hover around them, and are always present, lest perchance someone comes to pray while they were absent and they could not hear? O monster, who ought to be banished to the ends of the earth! Do you laugh at the relics of the martyrs and, in company with Eunomius, the father of heresy, slander the churches of Christ?²⁸⁰

Evidently, Vigilantius could be equally withering and is getting as good as he gave. Eunomius had been an Arian apologist.²⁸¹

After a section defending the custom of vigils against those who sometimes abuse them, Jerome turns to the subject of miracles. Since this is our focus, it is worthwhile to look at Vigilantius's arguments at some length. He appears to adhere to the traditional view that miracles are necessary only for unbelievers who cannot be reached by words, and that believers, already recognizing the truth through preaching, don't need them to believe. This kind of thinking appears to have been one of the most important obstacles to the general acceptance of contemporary miracles as something for which ordinary Christians too might pray — a view which Victricius had already presented in 396 and which will be seen full-blown twenty-odd years later in the *Miracles of Stephen* in north Africa. Jerome does not deny the traditional view but shifts the attention to the nature of the power manifested, saying that Vigilantius

argues against the signs and miracles which are wrought in the basilicas of the martyrs, and says that they are of service to the unbelieving, not to believers, as though the question now

²⁸⁰ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 8, PL, 23, cols 361D–362B: 'Male facit ergo Romanus episcopus, qui super mortuorum hominum Petri et Pauli, secundum nos ossa veneranda, secundum te vilem pulvisculum, offert domino sacrificia [...] ut polluta omnia polluat, et quasi sepulcra Pharisaeica foris dealbata sint cum intus immundo cinere? Ergo cineres suos amant animae martyrum, et circumvolant eos, semperque praesentes sunt, ne forte aliquis precator advenerit, absentes audire non possunt? O portentum in terras ultimas deportandum! Rides et reliquiis martyrum, et cum auctore huius haereseos Eunomio, Ecclesiis Christi calumniam struis [...]?'

²⁸¹ Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, p. 97.

were for whose advantage they occur, not by what power. Granted that signs belong to the faithless, who, because they would not obey the word and doctrine, are brought to believe by means of signs. Even our Lord wrought signs for the unbelieving, and yet our Lord's signs are not on that account to be impugned, because those people were faithless, but must be worthy of greater admiration because they were so powerful that they subdued even the hardest hearts, and compelled men to believe. And so I will not have you tell me that signs are for the unbelieving; but answer my question: how is it that poor worthless dust and ashes are associated with this wondrous power of signs and miracles?²⁸²

Without clothing it in theology, like Victricius, Jerome too is saying, just believe what you see, and remember, Christ did it too. Thereupon, however, he takes a different tack and launches a sarcastic personal assault:

I see, I see, most unfortunate of mortals, why you are so sad and what causes you fear. That unclean spirit who forces you to write these things has often been tortured by this worthless dust, yes, and is being tortured at this moment, and although in your case he conceals the wounds [he inflicts], in others he confesses [his presence]. You will hardly follow the heathen and impious Porphyry and Eunomius, and pretend that these are the tricks of the demons, and that they do not really cry out, but feign their torments. Let me give you my advice: go to the basilicas of the martyrs, and some day you will be cleansed; you will find there many like yourself, and will be set on fire, not by the martyrs' tapers which offend you, but by invisible flames; and you will freely proclaim your name — that you who speak in the person of Vigilantius are really either Mercury, greedy of gain [...] or at all events Father Bacchus of drunken fame [...] with his ever ruby face, foaming lips, and unbridled brawling.²⁸³

²⁸² Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 10, PL, 23, col. 363C–D: 'Argumentatur contra signa atque virtutes, quae in basilicis martyrum fiunt, et dicit eas incredulis prodesse, non credentibus, quasi nunc hoc quaeratur, quibus fiant, et non, qua virtute fiant. Esto, signa sint in fidelium, qui quoniam sermoni et doctrinae credere noluerunt, signis adducantur ad fidem et Dominus incredulis signa faciebat, et tamen non idcirco Domini suggillanda sunt signa, quia illi infideles erant, sed maiori admirationi erunt, quia tantae fuere potentiae, ut etiam mentes durissimas edomarent, et ad fidem cogerent. Itaque nolo mihi dicas, signa infidelium sunt, sed responde quomodo in vilissimo pulvere et favillas, nescio qua, tanta signorum virtutumque praesentia?'

²⁸³ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 10, PL, 23, cols 363D–364A: 'Sentio, sentio, infelicissime mortalium, quid doleas, quid timeas. Spiritus iste immundus qui haec te cogit scribere, saepe hoc vilissimo tortus est pulvere, immo hodieque torquetur, et qui in te plagas dissimular, in caeteris confitetur. Nisi forte in morem gentilium impiorumque, Porphyrii et Eunomii, has praestigias daemonum esse confingas, en non vere clamare daemones, sed sua simulare tormenta. Do consilium, ingredi basilicas martyrum, et aliquando purgaberis: inuenies ibi multos socios tuos, et nequaquam cereis martyrum, qui tibi displicent, sed flammis invisibilibus combureris, et fateberis, quod nunc negas, et tuum nomen, qui in Vigilantio loqueris, libere proclamabis, te esse aut Mercurium propter nummorum cupiditatem, [...] aut certe Liberum patrem pro ebrietate [...] et semper rubente facie, et spumantibus labiis, effrenatisque conviciis.'

Would all this invective have convinced the dim-witted laymen and 'little women' he was supposedly also addressing? Jerome was passionately defending his own chosen identity and that of his companions. Thus, he continues, he himself does not dare enter the basilicas of the martyrs 'when I have been angry, or have had evil thoughts in my mind'.²⁸⁴ (Did he dare to go to church the morning after the night in which he had scribbled this treatise?) And if Vigilantius derides his views as on a level with 'muliercularum deliramenta' (the deliriums of little women), Jerome — unabashed — is (now) not ashamed to have a faith like those who first saw the risen Lord.²⁸⁵

After ridiculing Vigilantius's rejection of continence and fasting as being instigated by his tavernkeeper's interests, and referring to Paul's Epistles to justify sending money to support the Palestinian monasteries, Jerome defends the monks' flight from the world with the arguments that there are few of them anyway and that it is better to flee than to be overcome by evil.²⁸⁶ He concludes by saying that this letter has been dictated in a single night because Sisinnius was eager to bring the alms he was carrying to the brothers in Egypt: 'if it were not so, however, the subject itself was so openly blasphemous as to call for the indignation of a writer rather than a multitude of proofs.'²⁸⁷ No more is heard of Vigilantius after this except that he served as a priest in Barcelona.²⁸⁸ Perhaps Riparius and Vigilantius's bishop, Exsuperius of Toulouse, exerted pressure to have him move out of southern Gaul, or his move was in some way connected with the Germanic hordes that overran the country in 406–07. A later writer, the priest Gennadius of Marseille, writes about Vigilantius that

he wrote a few things in enthusiasm for religion. But, seduced by human praise and taking on more than he could handle, this man who was polished in language though not well-versed in the meaning of Scripture, commented with a wrong understanding upon the second vision of Daniel; and he also said other frivolous things which need to be placed in the catalogue of heresies. The blessed Jerome replied to this.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 12, PL, 23, col. 364C: 'quando iratus fuero, et aliquid mali in meo animo cogitavero'.

²⁸⁵ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 12, PL, 23, col. 364D.

²⁸⁶ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 15–16, PL, 23, cols 366D–368A.

²⁸⁷ Jerome, *C. Vig.*, 17, PL, 23, col. 368B: 'alioquin et ipsa materia apertam habuit blasphemiam, quae indignationem magis scribentis, quam testimoniorum multitudinem flagitaret.'

²⁸⁸ Lizop, *Les Convenae et les Consoranni*, p. 357.

²⁸⁹ Gennadius, *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, XXXV, PL, 58, col. 1078B–C: 'Scripsit et ipse zelo quidem religionis aliqua; sed seductus humana laude, et praesumens supra vires suas, homo lingua

Vigilantius's criticisms of the relic cult, although apparently voiced in an offensive manner, seem to have sprung from a sober, traditional view of the Christian faith as it was in apostolic times. They were remembered in the Protestant Reformation and have not lost their actuality today. As already indicated, he had perhaps originally been associated with the ascetic movement around Martin of Tours, which admired especially the miracles of the eastern monks and couldn't get enough of those of their own saint. Was he also inclined towards an apocalyptic view of his time, as we will see that Martin had been? It is not known what made him later come to disapprove of the new severe asceticism and its practices. He is also not likely to have believed in the spiritual purification through empathy with the martyr's sacrifice which someone like Prudentius proposed. One might speculate that his (alleged) lower-class upbringing, and perhaps insecurity about his self-taught learning, made it difficult to relate to the learned (and irascible) Jerome as the beacon of the ascetic movement. It is possible too that disgust at what he saw to be the commercial exploitation of Palestine's holy sites played a role in his change of mind about the new forms of Christian enthusiasm.

'Blessedness Does Not Consist in the Performance of Wonders': John Cassian on Avoiding Miracles

In the somewhat later monastic writings of John Cassian there are also reservations about miracles, but for a different reason. Like Prudentius, he focused upon spiritual purification, but instead of doing this through a meditative immersion in the martyrs' suffering, he followed the eastern monastic tradition of freeing the heart of the passions through ascetic discipline.²⁹⁰ And drawing on the spiritual experience of the eastern monks, he recognized but explicitly downplayed the performance of visible miracles by those who strove to be holy. His fifteenth discourse begins by distinguishing three kinds of healing miracles performed by living persons: those performed by God through the elect and the righteous as a reward for their merit, as well as according to Christ's command to the apostles; those performed by sinners and unworthy persons, but for the edification of the Church, only effective however if the subject him/herself has faith; and those by criminals

politus, non sensu Scripturarum exercitatus, exposuit pravo ingenio secundam visionem Danielis, et alia locutus est frivola, quae in catalogo haereticorum necessario ponuntur. Huic et B. Hieronymus respondit.'

²⁹⁰ See Chadwick, *John Cassian*, and Rousseau, *Ascetics*, pp. 169–234.

which are tricks by demons to discredit true religion and capture souls for themselves, like those of the false christs and prophets foretold by Christ.²⁹¹ Next, it is not the miracles which should be admired in one who performs them, but his zeal and achievement in the perfect spiritual life, for

the summit of perfection and blessedness does not consist in the performance of wonders but in the maintenance of the purity of love. [...] for we see that our Fathers, even when they possessed the grace of the Holy Spirit, [...] never wished to use [this gift] unless they were compelled to do so by an extreme and unavoidable necessity.²⁹²

Several examples of Egyptian monks doing this to avert catastrophe for a large number of people or for the region follow. Their model is Elijah's praying for the fire to come down from heaven to light his sacrifice to prove that his was the true God (1 Kings 18. 38): it had been necessary in order to save the faith of a whole people.

Thus, Cassian concludes that performing signs and miracles is not always necessary, nor advantageous to all, and is not granted to everyone. Humility is the mistress of all virtues:²⁹³

For in truth it is a greater miracle to eradicate the spark of lust in one's own flesh than to expel unclean spirits from others' bodies, and to repel the movements of fierce anger by the power of patience is a more magnificent sign than to command airy princes; it is greater to exclude the most consuming wounds of depression from one's heart than to expel someone else's fevers; to conclude: it is in many ways a more sublime power and more useful to cure the illnesses of one's own soul than those of another's body. For the more the soul is elevated above the body, the more outstanding its salvation is.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ John Cassian (Johannes Cassianus), *Collationes* [hereafter *Collat.*], xv. 1, CSEL, 13, pp. 426–27.

²⁹² John Cassian, *Collat.* xv. 2, 3, CSEL, 13, p. 428, lines 14–16, 17–21: 'perfectiois ac beatitudinis summam non in illorum mirabilium operatione, sed in caritatis puritate consistere [...]. Ideoque a patribus nostris [...] quin immo cum ea spiritus sancti gratia possiderent, numquam exercere voluerunt, nisi forte extrema illos et inevitabilis necessitas coartasset.'

²⁹³ John Cassian, *Collat.* xv. 7. 2, CSEL, 13, p. 433, line 6.

²⁹⁴ John Cassian, *Collat.* xv. 8, CSEL, 13, p. 434, lines 12–21: 'Et re vera maius miraculum est de propria carne fomitem eradicare luxuriae quam expellere inmundos spiritus de corporibus alienis, et magnificentius signum est virtute patientiae truculentos motus iracundiae coercere quam aëriis principibus imperare, plusque est exclusisse edacissimos de corde proprio tristitiae morsus quam valitudines alterius febresque corporas expulisse: postremo multis modis praeclarior virtus sublimiorque profectus est animae propriae curare languores quam corporis alieni. Quanto enim haec sublimior carne est, tanto praestantior eius est salus.'

Not only are spiritual virtues superior, then, but the ascetic's principle of distancing himself from the body here also plays a not insignificant role in downplaying healing miracles. While, presumably, martyrs' churches then proliferated and their miracles increased, the biographies of certain aristocratic bishops in south-eastern Gaul who had been trained in Cassian's brand of monasticism reflect his relativizing mindset, as would most of the writings of Pope Gregory the Great, in the same tradition, two centuries later.²⁹⁵

'Through the Coming of the Lord Jesus a Greater Grace Has Poured into the Earth'

As we saw, Ambrose, Eutropius, and Maximus explicitly presented the return of miracles as the effect of an increased grace announcing Christ's imminent return. Ambrose, threatened by physical danger, emphasized the martyrs' powers to defend the Church. His comparison of them with the prophet Elisha's invisible army of angels sticks in the mind. Eutropius's vindictive image of them as flying through the air with torches and two-edged swords to avenge the wrong that had been done to them, however, is not echoed by other writers.

Gaudentius, Maximus, and Prudentius emphasize the martyrs' intercession at the Last Judgement, and Gaudentius also points to their comforting and protecting spiritual companionship in this life. Victricius regarded their relics as suffused with Christ's healing light and suggested images of Paradise. The image of a religious dance, evoked by Ambrose, Victricius, and Maximus, also points to that of the saints in Paradise. Prudentius shows what makes the martyrs different from the divinized pagan heroes: the spiritual purification that one can experience in the presence of their relics. His adducing the image of a saint's shining face as effecting this, although there may be ancient pagan precedents, appears to be a signal poetic and spiritual discovery, perhaps of an interior psychic pattern in the Jungian sense; appearing briefly in Sulpicius's vision of the heaven-bound Martin, it went on to play a central role in the Uzalian dreams and visions, and to figure prominently again in Paulinus of Périgueux's revision of Sulpicius's stories about Martin.

The sceptics, however, asked hard questions about the new phenomenon and the 'paganlike' practices growing up around it; hostile parties even suspected

²⁹⁵ Cf. van Uytendange, 'Controverse biblique et patristique autour du miracle', p. 212, referring to Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*, pp. 88–94, 460–61. On Gregory the Great, see McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*.

'magic' and fraud in the pursuit of ecclesiastical power. Ambrose and John Cassian took a middle position in their relativization of miracles. For Ambrose they could be totally authentic but were not to be understood as the fundament of the Christian faith: that was the 'mystery' in the word of God. And Cassian — showing that miracles evidently were not uncommon in monastic circles — regarded their performance, as Anthony did, as a danger to the spiritual life, which should achieve purification through the ascetic discipline of eliminating all the passions.

What we have seen in these texts, then, is how the new miracles in the west first came into public view, how and why they were doubted, glorified, and resisted, and also how their acceptance tended to involve a new emphasis upon affective surrender that sidelined critical inquiry and that, against opposition, could turn into a bald pressure to conform and support the existing ecclesiastical power structures — or forfeit one's soul. In the period between Ambrose's enthusiastic first propagation of the new miracles and Cassian's calm and distanced putting these, at least for monks, in their place, the now already oft-mentioned but not yet examined more extensive texts of Sulpicius Severus, Paulinus of Nola, the anonymous author of *Uzalis*, and Augustine exerted an influence on contemporary Christian thinking. It is to their more elaborate imaging and discussion of miracles that we now turn.



Figure 2. 'The Fountain of Life', mosaic, Ravenna, Mausoleo di Galla Placidia.
Fifth century. Copyright Geneva Kornbluth.

‘EMPTY SUPERSTITIONS’? SULPICIUS SEVERUS’S DEFENCE OF A LIVING SAINT’S DEEDS OF POWER

In the last pages of his *Dialogues* about the miracles of Martin, bishop of Tours, the lawyer-turned-ascetic Sulpicius Severus reports a devastating criticism of the saint’s person by his own disciple Brictius; it was perhaps elicited by the fact that Martin had reprimanded him a day earlier for his worldly lifestyle now that he had become a priest: buying horses and attractive young barbarian slaves, male and female.¹ We are told that Martin saw two demons on a nearby rocky precipice, first egging Brictius on as he approached the saint and then watching gleefully while he,

full of insanity, vomited forth a thousand insults against Martin. [...] saying that he himself was holier, for he had been in the monastery since his youngest years and had grown up in the sacred discipline of the Church guided by Martin himself. Martin however, as he could not deny, had been stained from the beginning by his military service, and was now growing old through empty superstitions and phantasms of visions or, rather, ridiculous deliriums.²

After Martin’s silent prayer had expelled the demons’ influence from Brictius’s heart, he realized his mistake and threw himself at the saint’s feet begging forgiveness, which was granted at once. Many others in Martin’s own monastery too,

¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, intro., critical edn of the text, trans., and notes by Fontaine, SC, 510. Fontaine’s *Gallus* replaces Carolus Halm’s edition of Sulpicius’s *Dialogi* (CSEL, 1 (1866), pp. 152–216).

² Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 15. 2, 4, SC, 510, pp. 350–52: ‘plenus insaniae evomit in Martinum mille convicia. [...] se asserens sanctiorem, quippe qui a primis annis in monasterio inter sacras ecclesiae disciplinas ipso Martino educante crevisset: Martinum vero et a principio, quod ipse diffiteri non posset, militiae actibus sorduisse, et nunc per inanes superstitiones et fantasmata visionum ridicula prorsus inter deliramenta senuisse’.

however, are said not to have believed in his visions.³ Evidence of scepticism about his miracles — were these what were meant by the term ‘superstitions’? — appears, among other places, in a passionate authorial intrusion in which Sulpicius says that those who refuse to believe in them ‘do not believe in the deeds of power (*virtutes*) of the Christian Martin to which even the demons testify’.⁴ A number of such persons were sent away from the company about to listen to the stories about Martin at Sulpicius’s villa that were written up as his *Dialogues*.⁵ Although there appears to have been widespread contemporary admiration for the circulating reports of the miracles and visions of contemporary far-away eastern ascetics,⁶ evidently not everyone in the west was ready to believe the same of one of their own — even those closest to Martin himself and best able to observe him. Brictius’s choice of words, however, seems to point more specifically to the saint’s old age. Nevertheless, this incident also seems to point to a lack of understanding between sensitive and hardheaded personalities.

Among modern scholars, the above-mentioned passages have helped to raise serious questions about Sulpicius’s descriptions of Martin’s *virtutes*, a term that meant virtues as well as the deeds of power, or miracles, that were effected through or because of these.⁷ Were Martin’s miracles ‘empty superstitions’ and his visions ‘ridiculous deliriums’? In other words, were they his and other people’s enthusiastic wishful thinking, or had they been in some sense authentic transformational events? And if the latter, how should we understand what often appears to be Sulpicius’s fanciful description of them? Recent extensive and meticulous research has examined the descriptions thoroughly and recognized a certain historical base for almost all of these events. Very little attention, however, has been given to what may have been the saint’s and the subjects’ personal experience of these miracles: how we today might be able to empathize with or to relive and recognize, as it were, the transformations described. To access this, we need to reach through Sulpicius’s often terse style to its implicit symbolism. Thus Martin’s experience of his visions and cures will be examined for resemblances to what has now been extensively studied as the

³ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 13. 7, SC, 510, p. 278.

⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 6. 1, SC, 510, p. 310: ‘non credunt Martini virtutibus Christiani, quas daemones fatebantur’.

⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 1. 6–7, SC, 510, p. 290. On hostility towards Sulpicius in his region, see Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 295.

⁶ See Fontaine in *Gallus*, SC, 510, pp. 46–50, and Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 48–54.

⁷ See Fontaine in *Gallus*, SC, 510, pp. 51–56.

most ancient and today still ongoing effective way of dealing with physical and spiritual afflictions: shamanism.⁸ For shamans have been observed to combine transpersonal healing, that is, a transmitting of an energy or power from what they regard as the spiritual world, often through touch, with a stimulation of self-healing in the patient through the performance of symbolic strategies and ministrations. These seem to awaken what may be latent analogous energy patterns of wholeness in the unconscious or 'dream' awareness of the patient that in turn send congruous directive messages to the body's internal processes.⁹ This formulation, with its modern psychological and anthropological terminology, is our present way of describing and understanding what we observe as the actual physical effect of symbolic strategies activating forces we cannot see. When held against this shamanic model, as I hope to show, Sulpicius's descriptions of what he regarded as miracles with the only models of such events available to him — those in the Bible and in Christian and pagan literature — yield new aspects that help us appreciate these experiences today.

Taking this further, can Sulpicius's culture-bound language perhaps also be understood as attempting to describe, and thereby to transmit to his readers, experienced and imagined patterns and intimations of a manifold weaving invisible creative order — an order that, as a present-day theoretical physicist has shown, can be known only indirectly, through the physical manifestations it induces, as well as through the mental images it precipitates?¹⁰ Whether one calls this creative order 'God' or not is a personal choice. As indicated in the prologue of this book, in 'an increasing acknowledgement of an existential and experiential notion of truth', imagination, after its long rejection as irrelevant fancy, is now increasingly coming to be regarded as in some way 'an agent of revelation' as well as of creativity.¹¹ As we saw above, it has now been clinically and biomedically shown to be an active agent in physical as well as mental transformation.¹² Nevertheless, there is much about this kind of healing that we do not yet understand and may never fully understand. Emphatically, therefore, without thereby attributing what in fact happened in Sulpicius's stories only to the working of the imagination, the images which Sulpicius

⁸ A brief overview of shamanism is that of Eliade, 'Shamanism: An Overview'.

⁹ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, passim.

¹⁰ See Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*; Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 129; and cf. Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines'.

¹¹ Joy, 'Images, Imagination', col. 108. To the philosophers mentioned in this article — Gilbert Durand, Carl Gustav Jung, Mircea Eliade, Gaston Bachelard, and Paul Ricoeur — I would add Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key*.

¹² As in Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*.

evokes in his descriptions will be used as a hermeneutic tool to discover what may have been his understanding of the lived experiential patterns of Martin's miracles. The basis of this notion must have been his own experience of the man Martin, combined with the traditional *imaginaire* of Christian culture in his memory.

After a brief look at the history and the present state of the question about Sulpicius's presentation of Martin's miracles, and then at what may have been a very personal reason for the author to emphasize the miraculousness of Martin's actions, the descriptions of the constitutive events in Martin's life will be scrutinized for resemblances to shamanic experiences. This will be followed by an analysis of Martin's overcoming of what he discerned as patterns of evil in cures through his practical and symbolic strategies. Finally, Martin's visions and others' visionary perceptions of him and of his power will be examined for the patterns of affective experience which they make visible.

'A Catechism in Images': Sulpicius's Presentation of Martin's Miracles

Martin was still alive in 396 when Sulpicius's *Life of Martin* appeared as the first biography of a contemporary holy man in the west and the first there to defend miracles by a living saint.¹³ Its intended audience was not only the group of ascetic converts inspired by the saint himself, as well as educated aristocrats who might be persuaded to follow Martin's ideal, but also — and perhaps especially — those who persisted in not understanding or appreciating Martin's holiness and appear to have been harassing the author and his companions. It was followed by three letters that responded to a specific criticism of the saint's holy power and described his death and burial in 397. The more loosely structured *Dialogues* that followed in 404 were a literary representation of conversations about Martin after his death, held at Sulpicius's estate at Primuliacum in south-western Gaul.¹⁴ They consist of three parts: in the first, a friend who has just returned from visiting the reclusive ascetics in the east relates some of the stories he has been told there about their way of life and miraculous exploits, providing a background against which to offset Martin's achievements; in the second and third, another friend and one of Martin's disciples, Gallus, is presented as replying with what he and everyone present considered to be the superior lifestyle and miracles of Martin as a monk who was at the

¹³ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 17–58; and Standcliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 71–85. This edition includes Sulpicius's three subsequent *Epistolae*.

¹⁴ See Fontaine in *Gallus*, SC, 510, pp. 17–28.

same time bishop, combining intermittent seclusion with a consistent taking care of the needs of others in the world.

Countering what appears to be the prevalent scepticism around him, Sulpicius begins by strongly urging his readers to believe what he says, for he has written only about thoroughly verified facts.¹⁵ At the end of the *Life*, however, this statement reappears in an intimidating mode, saying that 'whoever reads this without believing it, will sin',¹⁶ for an unbelieving reader, it is said, would not be believing Christ's words that all the faithful would be able to duplicate his miracles, as Martin had done.¹⁷ In her study of Sulpicius's Martinian writings, however, Clare Stancliffe suggests that there cannot in general have been much doubt about miracles as such, for the lack of a 'scientific' world view and the general assumption that all reality was dominated by spiritual powers who could be addressed or manipulated admitted the possibility of these.¹⁸ Rather, there would have been scepticism about Martin's particular miracles through his personal combining of the new severe Egyptian-style asceticism — then associated with the Priscillianist ascetic movement in Gaul and Spain which was suspected of magic as well as of doctrinal heresy, and being persecuted¹⁹ — with a perceived simultaneous betrayal of it through pastoral activities in the world. In addition, as we saw, some regarded Martin's military past as disqualifying him for the clerical status he held.²⁰ Naturally, the acts of such a person would themselves be open to suspicion. Sulpicius's writings frequently indicate that many bishops in Gaul too had been hostile to him during his lifetime because his apostolic lifestyle confronted them with their own more worldly behaviour.²¹ Although the *Life of Martin* was soon read and appreciated all over the Roman world, his sainthood and miracles were for decades not officially recognized by the ecclesiastical authority in his own city — where the recalcitrant Briccius had succeeded Martin as bishop.²²

¹⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, I. 9, SC, 133, pp. 252–54.

¹⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXVII. 6, 7, SC, 133, p. 316: 'qui haec infideliter legit, ipse peccabit'.

¹⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, I. 26. 4–5, SC, 510, p. 208.

¹⁸ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 211, 217–19.

¹⁹ On this, see Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila*.

²⁰ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 311–12.

²¹ As in Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, I. 26. 3, SC, 510, p. 208.

²² Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 355–62; Beaujard, *Le Culte des saints en Gaule*, pp. 73–79.

Evaluating these different perceptions of Martin is not easy: Sulpicius's arguably tendentious presentation of him as a holy man of power is all the contemporary evidence we have about him. After his rehabilitation from the mid-fifth century, Martin went on to be recognized as the patron saint of all of Gaul in the sixth century and later²³ and remained one of the most popular saints in Europe throughout the Middle Ages.²⁴ His reputation and miracles were later severely questioned, however, by the Protestant reformers, by Enlightenment thinkers, and in the past century by certain hypercritical historians.²⁵ Are Sulpicius's ostensibly improbable miracle stories literary fabrications, as these critics claimed? Yes and no.

In the past twenty-five years, the erudite and sympathetic scholarship of Jacques Fontaine and Clare Stancliffe has analysed and assessed the historicity of Sulpicius's portrait of Martin in detail.²⁶ And, focusing upon a change wrought in mental attitudes and thought systems in Gaul by its Christianization in that period, Aline Rousselle interrogated archeological sources alongside Sulpicius's stories about Martin's miracles to show how his healing resembled as well as differed from that of contemporary pagan medicine and healing, at home and in sanctuaries, and how it changed individual and social perceptions.²⁷ Their work is the taking-off point for the present more limited study, and the reader is referred to their copious insights and extensive references.

Fontaine and Stancliffe, taking account of the context of current literary conventions and world views, have returned a mostly favourable verdict on the veracity of Sulpicius's text: although the author, for all his terseness, clearly everywhere selects and stylizes the material to make it appear as miraculous as possible, a considerable historical kernel appears to remain.²⁸ Sulpicius's approach to his material in the Martinian writings differs, however, from that in his roughly contemporaneous *Chronica*, an abbreviation of biblical history focusing especially upon the period of the book of Kings and upon the early Christian Church up to and

²³ Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*, pp. 45–46.

²⁴ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 6.

²⁵ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 171–98.

²⁶ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133–35, and in *Gallus*, SC, 510; Stancliffe in her *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*.

²⁷ Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*; see also Rousselle, 'Du sanctuaire au thaumaturge'.

²⁸ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 170, 205; Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 341–59.

including his own time.²⁹ His concern there for a clear and ordered chronology — almost entirely absent in the Martinian writings — is possibly connected with his adhering to Martin's expectations of an imminent end of the world. And he gives a common-sense presentation of the historical framework for the Christian 'mysteries', here presumably meaning revealed Christian doctrines,³⁰ which themselves, he says, should be read only in the original text.³¹

As we saw, however, Sulpicius insists that his emphatically miraculous presentation of Martin should be believed without question or discussion as a fulfilment of a saying of Christ. Whereas earlier critical historians had suggested that this presentation was 'imposture', Fontaine and Stancliffe point to another way of appraising Sulpicius's stories. Instead of literary artifice, they write, the religious imagination evident in Sulpicius's stories is a culturally conditioned perception and real experience of the world and self which needs to be treated as much as a historical fact as the events that customarily pass for this.³² And in their opinion the cures too look as though, in one way or another, they actually happened. Similarly Aline Rousselle, taking modern medical knowledge as her point of departure, regards all the afflictions healed as hysterical or psychosomatic ones resulting from anxieties; she argues that Martin's cures, consistently presented as totally miraculous by Sulpicius, not only relieved these anxieties and thereby removed their physical symptoms, but now and then also demonstrably used simple practical procedures of contemporary medicine which Martin may have learned in the army.³³ In what follows, I shall attempt not to add to this meticulous scholarship but to build upon it. In my opinion, however, the lack of sufficient evidence precludes a regarding of the cured afflictions as having necessarily been only hysterical or psychosomatic ones. There is modern rigorously scientific evidence for the healing of all kinds of conditions through what has been termed 'subtle energies', in and outside a religious context, and combined or not with imaginative strategies, including that of

²⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica*, SC, 441. Cf. Stancliffe's comparison of it with Sulpicius's Martinian writings, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 174–82.

³⁰ See the many interrelated meanings of *mysterium* in Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, pp. 547–48.

³¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica*, *praef.* 3, lines 24–25, SC, 441, p. 90: 'universa divinarum rerum mysteria non nisi ex ipsis fontibus hauriri queunt'. Quoted by Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, p. 115.

³² Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, esp. pp. 184, 198; Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 215–27, outlines the world view.

³³ Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, pp. 110–11, 115–19, 225–26.

prayer.³⁴ Traces of imaginative experience — in the healer as well as in his subjects — being more readily discoverable than those of the transmission of healing energies through touch, is it possible to discover in Sulpicius's imagery something more specific about how he thought Martin's healing was effected and experienced?

As our author describes the miracles, they most resemble those of the Christ who is shown to have been the centre of Martin's life and the source of his holy power: predominantly cures and exorcisms, but also control of nature. A number of miracles, however, also show similarities to those of pagan saints, the biblical prophets, the apostles, and the eastern monastic heroes, as well as those in the apocryphal acts of the apostles.³⁵ Fontaine accordingly describes the carefully crafted, soberly classical, literary style of the *Life* as manifesting in its 'mosaic'-like succession of loosely associated scenes 'un fourmillement ingénieux' (an ingenious teeming or swarming, like that of ants) of allusions and demi-citations of ancient and biblical writings, resulting in almost continuously overlapping multiple — often pagan as well as Christian — meanings.³⁶ I shall point to some of these in my analysis, but will focus upon the role of what is described as or implied to be the subjects' imaginative perception and its dynamics as an attempt to make not only Sulpicius's view, but possibly also the experiences themselves, come alive for us today.

For many today may still regard Sulpicius's miracle stories, if not, like Briccius, as fantastic inventions, as curious artefacts from a distant past and/or embellished misunderstandings of what we now know to be natural processes. Even Father Hippolyte Delehaye's extensive scholarship defending and evaluating saints' cults, and that of others who followed him, has avoided discussing what actually takes place in a miracle.³⁷ Fontaine, however, posits four categories of miracles, according to their possible historicity:

1. 'objective miracles' — resurrections, cures and exorcisms resembling those in the Gospels, which are acts of charity and confirm the faith of the recipient as well as authenticate the performer's mission;
2. miracles of coincidence — coincidences interpreted as signs of power: more stylized in presentation, reflecting the 'magico-religious' mindset of the popular imagination;

³⁴ Elaborately reported in Harpur, *Uncommon Touch*. See also Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', p. 22.

³⁵ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 97–134; Standcliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 61–70.

³⁶ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 104, 100 respectively.

³⁷ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, p. 180.

3. folkloric miracles — folk motifs of the marvellous that popular imagination transferred upon the saint; and
4. fictional, literary miracles — perhaps only one: the possible invention by Sulpicius of Martin's cure of his friend Paulinus's blindness; it could be a metaphor for his conversion to the religious life.³⁸

Stancliffe suggests that metaphorical language plays a substantial role in Sulpicius's descriptions of other miracles as well.³⁹ Rousselle, however, points to Martin's using tweezers as a normal medical procedure, which argues for the event's historicity.⁴⁰ In what follows I shall attempt to show that Sulpicius's covertly symbolic and imaginative language, tending to point to as well as induce a similarly imaginative perception of sensory phenomena, is in fact the key to understanding his presentation of Martin's miracles.

It is clear that Fontaine would regard only his first 'objective' category as possibly authentic historical events. Restricting my investigation to cures, some of these indeed appear to resemble then current medical treatments and common afflictions such as blindness, paralysis, muteness, and deafness, which can now be understood as caused by a psychosomatic blocking of these organs that, because there is no intrinsic organic impairment, are liable to a sudden cure when the anxiety that caused the blocking is relieved.⁴¹ Modern studies of possession, furthermore, show how it can solve psychic conflict or disorientation by being brought on as an abreaction and healing catharsis by a knowledgeable therapist.⁴² Since it is not possible for us to obtain accurate knowledge about the diagnosis of the ailments Sulpicius describes, we must reserve judgement on whether or not all the illnesses were only 'psychosomatic'. The progress of modern medical insights, however, raises the question whether the concept of a 'miraculous' cure as a by definition incomprehensible and therefore supernatural event is perhaps becoming an outdated one. As we saw, today in their usually, but not always, secular idiom, our disciplines of cultural anthropology and (humanistic) psychology are finding healing energy patterns that reveal themselves as transforming mental images in experiences that

³⁸ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 198–202.

³⁹ See on this Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 190–94.

⁴⁰ Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, pp. 110–11.

⁴¹ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 250–54.

⁴² This is the central theme in Sargant, *Mind Possessed*; an overview is in Crapanzano, 'Spirit Possession: An Overview'.

used to be designated as ‘miracles’.⁴³ Being able to identify some of the physiological and psychological channels through which mind-body healing works, however, does not diminish its objective status of an autonomous creative process which is as yet largely not understood and may never be. Our focus, therefore, will be only upon how these healing processes may have been experienced and thought about.

Sulpicius presents Martin’s miracles and prominent visionary mentality through the prism of the tradition through which he understood himself: that of the biblical prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, and the contemporary eastern monks.⁴⁴ Fontaine describes his mentality as a ‘pneumatisme actif’ (consistent tendency to act through the Spirit) and an ‘illuminisme naturel’ (natural receptiveness for receiving spiritual enlightenment) coupled with a lively and delicate sensibility.⁴⁵ The saint’s perceptions and visionary experiences resemble the mystic states described by the philosopher-psychologist William James:

The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely ‘understandable’ world. Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region [...]. So far as our ideal impulses originate in this region (and most of them do originate in it, for we find them possessing us in a way for which we cannot articulately account), we belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world [...]. Yet the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for [...] when we commune with it, [...] we are turned into new men [...]. But that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself. [...] whatever it may be on its *farther* side, the ‘more’ with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life.⁴⁶

Although the terminology has been extended and refined, this view has been much developed in the past century.⁴⁷ Not only do Sulpicius’s densely formulated descriptions of Martin’s miracles and visions seem to point to such experiences. I shall attempt to show more specifically that certain events in the saint’s life also resemble constitutive ones in the shaman’s life: the receiving of an empowering imaged dream-vision of the healing spirit world, and thereafter curing individuals and the community by connecting himself and them to this spirit world through

⁴³ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*.

⁴⁴ See Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 135–70, esp. p. 150.

⁴⁵ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 184, 207, 209.

⁴⁶ James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 389, 386 (emphasis in original). For a recent view, see Dierkens, ‘Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines’.

⁴⁷ Notably by Jung and those working with his ideas, such as Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*.

a condensed symbolical re-enacting of this dream that induces an experience of catharsis and renewal.

Fontaine has called the *Life of Martin*, written elliptically in loosely connected brief medallion-like scenes, 'une [...] sorte de protreptique en images ou de biographie "précathéchétique"' (a kind of exhortation in images or 'precathechismal' biography).⁴⁸ Notwithstanding its intentional terseness, it reflects the then developing style of literary composition that organizes associatively through images rather than discursively through conceptualized structures⁴⁹ — a habit that may well be connected with a general increased frequency in this period of experiences of visionary dreams and apparitions.⁵⁰ As already indicated, the late Gaston Bachelard showed in his poetical-philosophical studies that mental, that is, 'poetically' emerging, images make visible to the conscious awareness what he called psychic dynamisms, patterns of psychic movement — dynamics which tend to be replicated in the reader through a spontaneous affective mimesis of the text.⁵¹ This chapter will attempt to show how Sulpicius's verbal imagery — in its quality of being visualized patterns of psychic movement — may also have been central in the experience of Martin's miracles. These, it will also be argued, may now be understood — in essence, as the saint himself in his own tradition understood them — as the overcoming, on the spiritual-imaginal level of consciousness, of figures of disabling spiritual patterns manifesting themselves also in persons.

'He Will Be There When We Speak About Him': The Author and his Texts

Sulpicius Severus was a young Aquitanian lawyer who in the early 390s, after hearing — probably from his friend Paulinus — about the signal personality and deeds of Bishop Martin of Tours, went to visit him. This encounter so impressed him that he began to gather information for a biography that was intended to be the first western counterpart of the first Christian saint's life: Athanasius's by then very well-known *Life of Anthony*, one of the first hermits in the Egyptian desert.⁵²

⁴⁸ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, p. 75.

⁴⁹ Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, pp. 3–24.

⁵⁰ Antin, 'Autour du songe de saint Jérôme'. On dreams in this period generally, see Hanson, 'Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity', and Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*. Cf. Kelsey, *God, Dreams and Revelation*.

⁵¹ Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes*, pp. 10–13.

⁵² On this and the following, see Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 17–49; and Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 15–19, 30–38, 44–47.

And as will be seen, the events in Sulpicius's Martinian stories, although presented in a different literary format, show many resemblances to those concerning Anthony and other eastern ascetics.⁵³ After the early death of his wife, Sulpicius in 393/94 retreated from secular concerns and, inspired by Martin's Marmoutier, founded a quasi-monastic community on one of his estates. As we saw, there was no little hostility to it in his surroundings; defending it and his convictions is clearly a central reason for his writing. Another is, as also already indicated, the author's everywhere evident strong disappointment with the behaviour of the current aristocratic bishops in the west. Many of these were highly educated aristocrats who tended to gravitate around the imperial court and who actively disparaged the 'uneducated' former Pannonian soldier Martin as an unworthy and annoyingly unconventional outsider who refused to compromise Christian principles by adjusting his expectations to the contrary concerns of the civil authority. The state having become officially Christian in the late fourth century, what Sulpicius appears to have wanted was to undo the many assimilations and compromises which the Church in its new role of partner in government had felt obliged to make, and to reinstate pristine, apostolic Christian values for Church leaders as they are described in the New Testament. And to a certain extent he succeeded, for the ideal of the monk-bishop was eventually adopted by a significant number of the Gallic bishops.⁵⁴

The author himself, however, gives other reasons for his writing.⁵⁵ In the dedicatory letter to his friend Desiderius, he offers the then customary profession of authorial modesty, but now in a Christian idiom. Thus he apologizes beforehand for any crudities of language. He reminds his readers 'ut res potius quam verba perpendant' (that content is more important than the words used to present it), that the Kingdom of God 'non in eloquentia sed in fide constar' (does not consist in eloquence but in faith), and that salvation after all had first been preached to fishermen. He concludes that the content itself, rather than the author, should speak to the reader.⁵⁶ He means that he has intentionally left out the customary 'decoration' which we saw in Juvenius and has focused upon representing what, in his view, actually happened. In fact, as I shall attempt to show, he has condensed

⁵³ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 86–107, 228–48.

⁵⁴ Heinzlmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien*, pp. 193–94.

⁵⁵ See Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 72–75; Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 71–80; and Strunk, *Kunst und Glaube in der lateinischen Heiligenlegenden*, pp. 14–26.

⁵⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini, Epistula dedicatoria*, I–VI, SC, 133, pp. 248–50.

and half-concealed larger symbolisms in ostensibly simple stories that everyone can understand, expecting the educated reader to recognize them.

In the then following preface to the *Life*, Sulpicius states that his purpose is not the achieving of authorial renown in human memories through clever fictions of 'stulta virtus' (stupid heroism) or 'inanis philosophia' (empty philosophy)⁵⁷ — all of which are to perish with the present world. Instead, eternal life is to be sought, 'not by writing or fighting or philosophizing, but by living piously, religiously, in a holy manner'.⁵⁸ Accordingly, he will write about a model (*exemplum*) of this life so as to inspire his readers to 'true wisdom, the heavenly army and divine virtue'.⁵⁹ And for his writing, Sulpicius hopes to receive not empty human acclaim for it but a reward from God.⁶⁰

In his letters, praise and the need of a continuing relationship with his personal teacher and protector predominate. The second letter begins with the description of the author's vision early one morning after he had fallen into a light sleep after a night of sad reflections about his sins and the coming Judgement:

suddenly I seemed to see the holy Bishop Martin, attired in a brilliant white toga, with a face glowing like fire, eyes sparkling like stars and shining hair. And he seemed to me to be in the physical appearance and form which I knew so that — it is almost too difficult to express this — it was possible to recognize him although one could not look at him.⁶¹

The description of the saint's glorified appearance is obviously modelled upon that of the transfigured Christ and the heavenly Christ in Revelation (Matthew 17. 2 and Revelation 1. 13–17). Certain stories about Egyptian ascetics's visions, however, report the prophet Elijah's face as being seen to emit light, and a vision of Christ as King was deemed not possible to be looked at 'because of the great light that flashed in his presence'.⁶² Not without some vanity, Sulpicius then relates that

⁵⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, I. 3, 5, SC, 133, pp. 250–52.

⁵⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, I. 4, SC, 133, p. 252: 'non scribendo aut pugnando vel philosophando, sed pie sancte religioseque vivendo'.

⁵⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, I. 6, SC, 133, p. 252: 'ad veram sapientiam et caelestem militiam divinamque virtutem'.

⁶⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, I. 6, SC, 133, p. 252.

⁶¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, II. 3, SC, 133, pp. 324–26: 'cum repente sanctum martinum episcopum videre mihi videor, praetextum toga candida, vultu igneo, stellantibus oculis, crine purpureo; atque ita mihi in ea habitudine corporis formaeque qua noveram videbatur ut, quod eloqui nobis paene difficile est, non possit aspicere, cum possit agnosci.'

⁶² MacDermot, *Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East*, pp. 441, 453.

the saint, holding up the author's book about his life in his hand, smiled at him. Upon this, Sulpicius embraced the saint's knees, asking for his blessing as usual, and 'felt the sweetest touch of his hand on my head'⁶³ while he mentioned the name of the Cross in his blessing. The vision ends when Martin is suddenly lifted up, traverses the air, and disappears into an open heaven, followed by his recently deceased disciple Clarus.⁶⁴ Seeing such an ascension is a motif that also appears in the stories of the eastern ascetics.⁶⁵ As he tried to follow them, Sulpicius woke up. While he was congratulating himself on his vision, however, a servant came to tell him the distressing news of Martin's decease. Although Martin's body was buried in Tours, Sulpicius managed to obtain Clarus's body for his private chapel.⁶⁶

Fontaine notes that Martin's appearance and gestures in the vision present an image of the exalted idea which the author had of his hero and a kind of 'psycho-analysis' in images of Sulpicius's religious consciousness.⁶⁷ Thus the author later confesses that, although Martin had shown him during his earthly life how to ascend to heaven in the way he has just seen, he still feels unable to do it on his own and sees his only hope of deserving to achieve this as through Martin's intercessory prayers.⁶⁸ This hope and assumption that the controversial Martin has now achieved the status up to then only ascribed to long-dead martyrs is a bold one; Sulpicius defends it by describing Martin's life of constantly being assaulted by evil spirits as a new-style 'bloodless martyrdom'.⁶⁹ What the vision also makes clear, however, is his deep need to experience the saint's continued presence and blessing in this world. It reappears in words at the end of the letter, assuring his addressee:

No, he will not be absent from us — believe me, he will not. He will be there when we speak about him; he will stand alongside us when we pray. And as he has deigned to grant

⁶³ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, II. 4, SC, 133, p. 326: 'superpositamque capiti meo manum tactu blandissimo sentiebam'.

⁶⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, II. 4–5, SC, 133, p. 326.

⁶⁵ As in Jerome, *Vita sancti Pauli primi eremitaе*, 14, PL, 23, col. 27B. Cf. Tyrannius Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, XVI. 2, 14, ed. by Schulz-Flügel, p. 345, lines 105–09.

⁶⁶ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 31.

⁶⁷ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 135, p. 1198.

⁶⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, II. 18, SC, 133, p. 334.

⁶⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, II. 12, SC, 133, p. 330. Jerome mentions this in his *Epist.* 108. 31, CSEL, 55, p. 349, lines 11–14. Other references in Murphy, 'Martyr', p. 313.

us from today, he will often let himself be seen in his glory while, as he has just done, constantly protecting us with his blessing.⁷⁰

Sulpicius's hoping/expecting Martin to be there when spoken of resembles Jesus's words to his disciples (Matthew 18. 20). The last sentences of Sulpicius's third *Epistle*, describing the saint's death and funeral, repeat what appears to be Sulpicius's heartfelt need: 'Martin, poor and modest, enters heaven as a rich man [in virtues]. From there, as I hope, he looks down upon and protects me, writing this, and you, reading.'⁷¹ Martin and presumably his blessing are thus made present through the act of writing or reading about him: the affective experience of him by an interior mimesis of what is described — the word presences its referent. A picture too — of the saint 'in his glory', as seen in the vision? — must have helped. From a letter to him from his friend Paulinus of Nola, to whom the *Life* was sent upon its completion, we know that Sulpicius had a portrait of Martin painted on the wall of the chapel he built on his estate.⁷² There the image of the saint, at least, would visibly be looking down on him as he prayed and worshipped.

One reason for Sulpicius's repeated insistence upon the real occurrence of Martin's miracles may thus have been that they would authenticate his hero's being a conduit for Christ, and thereby the efficacy of what Sulpicius hoped to be his continuing blessing — stabilizing and protecting what may have been his somewhat insecure sense of self.⁷³ As we shall see in Paulinus of Périgueux's later reworking of Sulpicius's material, however, an important effect of Sulpicius's writing was that his readers' acceptance and affective assimilation of Martin's miracles made these models of personal hope and expectation in the years to come, picturing what might happen again if the saint were properly asked. Perhaps these miracles, alongside the inspiration towards a holier life, is understood to be the 'reward from God' (*a Deo praemium*) which Sulpicius held out to those who believed in Martin's miracles.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, II. 16, SC, 133, p. 332: 'Non deerit nobis ille, mihi crede, non deerit: intererit de se sermocinantibus, adstabit orantibus; quodque iam hodie praestare dignatus est, videndum se in gloria sua saepe praebebit, ad adsidua, sicut ante paululum fecit, benedictione nos proteget.'

⁷¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, III. 21, SC, 133, p. 344: 'Martinus pauper et modicus caelum dives ingreditur. Illinc nos, ut spero, custodiens me haec scribentem respicit, te legentem.'

⁷² Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 32. 2, lines 14–15, CSEL, 29, p. 276. On this, see de Nie, 'Paulinus of Nola and the Image Within the Image'.

⁷³ Fontaine (in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 54–58) adjudges Sulpicius as unstable, tormented, and often unhappy; Stancliffe disagrees in *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 44–47.

⁷⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXVII. 7, SC, 133, p. 316.

'Man Full of God': Shamanic Elements in Martin's Life and Deeds

Turning now to Sulpicius's portrait of his hero, as will be seen, he consistently presents Martin not only as a holy ascetic but as a man of power⁷⁵ who constantly discerns the lurking invisible presence of the Evil One and forces him to depart.⁷⁶ Thus, after Martin's first miracle, the resurrection of a young monk in his monastery, it is his power that is emphasized. 'He who was already regarded by all as holy, was [now] also held to be powerful and truly apostolic'⁷⁷ — that is, he was able to duplicate the miracles of the apostles. And this may have been Martin's own primary understanding of himself. For as is evident in the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles experienced the powers of the spiritual world — regarded by modern psychology as psychic configurations of energy⁷⁸ — as a present reality, to be dealt with ritually. This dramatic vision of continuous conflict, which had also been that of Saint Anthony, necessitated Martin's habit of an unremitting prayer that presented Christ in his heart, to help him deal with it.⁷⁹ For in this period, a neutral zone or power vacuum was inconceivable: everywhere, there was either good power or evil power.⁸⁰

This perception is likely to have been made more acute by Martin's belief, as will be seen, that the world as he knew it would soon end.⁸¹ Although Sulpicius characteristically does not mention it, Joel's prophecy about the Last Days before the Day of the Lord, quoted in Acts, is so applicable to what Martin was doing that it may have been prominent in his view of himself as well as of his own time:

And in the last days it shall be, the Lord says, that I shall pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and indeed on my menservants and my maidservants in those days will I pour out my Spirit; and they will prophesy. And I will show wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and the vapour of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and magnificent day of

⁷⁵ On this concept as inseparable from religious experience, see Miller, 'Power'.

⁷⁶ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 92, 139, 160–62.

⁷⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VII. 7, SC, 133, p. 268: 'ut qui sanctus iam ab omnibus habebatur, potens etiam et vere apostolicus haberetur'.

⁷⁸ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 341–42; similarly Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*, p. 50.

⁷⁹ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, p. 160.

⁸⁰ Angenendt, 'Die Liturgie und die Organisation des kirchlichen'.

⁸¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXIV. 1–3, SC, 133, p. 306.

the Lord comes. And it shall be that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Joel 2. 28–32; Acts 2. 17–21)

In Acts, after Peter had interpreted the prophet's words to fit the apostles' situation after the resurrection of Christ, many present let themselves be baptized, and the apostles began to perform wonders and signs (*prodigia et signa*) in Jerusalem (Acts 2. 43) as well as to have visions from time to time. As we saw, the relative scarcity of literary traces of Christian miracles after the apostolic age seems to indicate that these became less frequent or in any case less in the public view,⁸² so that in the late fourth century Augustine still insisted that they had in his time in fact ceased altogether because the world now believed.⁸³ Briccius and his supporters in Tours appear to have been of the same opinion. But Martin, in what looks like his natural predisposition, imitated and enacted what he sensed to be Christ's and the apostles' omnipresent healing love in his praying for the alleviation of others' suffering. He may, initially, have been almost as surprised by the result as others were. For, whereas as we saw the east had known at least one prominent living Christian healer in the third century⁸⁴ and eastern monks were known to be miracle-workers, Martin was the first one we know about in Gaul.⁸⁵ How did he come to be a healer? The shamanic model may help us to recognize this in what Sulpicius tells us.

Shamanism: 'The Medicine of the Imagination'

Morton Kelsey writes about Jesus in his *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing* (1988) that 'we find that his life and acts, his teaching and practice, are rather akin to a shamanism based on an intimate relationship with a loving god. [...] an important study might be made comparing the ministry of Jesus with that of shamanism'.⁸⁶ He emphasizes that the healing images and symbols which shamans use to initiate healing processes resemble actual patterns of experience of the

⁸² Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*, pp. 103–24, however, finds considerable evidence that they continued to happen, albeit less prominently.

⁸³ Augustine, *De util. cred.*, 16. 34, CSEL, 25, p. 43, lines 16–19; Augustine, *Vera relig.*, xxv. 47, lines 27–31, CCSL, 32, pp. 216–17; cited in de Vooght, 'Théologie du miracle', p. 221.

⁸⁴ Bishop Gregory the Thaumaturge; see Crouzel, 'Gregor I (Gregor der Wundertäter)', and Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*, p. 137.

⁸⁵ Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, p. 172.

⁸⁶ Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*, p. 40. Remus, *Jesus as Healer*, pp. 38–39, characterizes Jesus as a 'wounded healer'.

spiritual world, designated by Jung as 'archetypes', that are innate in humankind and that have the power to contact the corresponding spiritual realities and offer ways of relating to them.⁸⁷

The term 'archetype' had been used by the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo to refer to the image of God innate in man (cf. Genesis 1. 26–27). In the thought of the third-century Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus it referred to a divine idea in the transcendental realm of which the phenomenon was a mere reflection.⁸⁸ As we saw earlier, it was through an examination of the subjective experiences of his patients and of himself, however, that Jung, in the twentieth century, discovered what he regarded as inherited universal patterns of psychic functioning that revealed themselves through drives and compulsions as well as through compelling spontaneous images and fantasies.⁸⁹ These archetypal patterns could be reflected through the outer world of sense experience, through the inner world of the imagination, or through the unconscious world of the body.⁹⁰ Modern shamanic studies presumably refer to such patterns when, speaking of shamanism as in fact 'a biologically based spiritual healing system', they state that 'the psycho-biological bases of shamanism' include 'brain processes, *operations of innate representational modules*, and neurological structuring of fundamental structures of consciousness' (emphasis added); shamanism is today regarded as a valid and 'a natural religious and spiritual form'.⁹¹

Evidently unbeknownst to Kelsey, Eugen Drewermann had already made the study he suggested in his *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese* (1984). He states very clearly that Jesus's miracles cannot be understood without giving the wisdom of the shamans its due.⁹² His view of miracle is also that the psyche contains inborn patterns of energy or archetypes that become visible in a culturally conditioned way as mental images and that these, when affectively internalized as in meditation or visualization or dream-thinking, can activate, as it were, these latent mental and physical healing patterns.⁹³ A shaman like the Native American Black Elk, he

⁸⁷ Kelsey, *Other Side of Silence*, pp. 178–79. Similarly Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', pp. 11, 21. Cf. Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, pp. 31–73.

⁸⁸ Moon, 'Archetypes'.

⁸⁹ Moon, 'Archetypes', p. 459.

⁹⁰ Moon, 'Archetypes', p. 460.

⁹¹ Winkelmann, 'Shamanism: An Overview', pp. 8276 and 8279, respectively.

⁹² Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 785.

⁹³ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 129: 'bildet [...] die Gottmässigkeit der menschlichen Seele, ihre wunderbare Fähigkeit, sich inden Schichten ihres Unbewussten dem

writes, achieves the same result by addressing the psyche through symbolic ritual.⁹⁴ Entering his dream or imagistic consciousness, this healer connects with his initiatory dream of the spirit world, diagnoses the illness with the aid of his imaged spirit helper as a spiritual condition in the traditional images of his world view, and then leads the patient in a cathartic ritual experience to and through these image-patterns which are the bridges between body and psyche. It is this structured experience that effects what are regarded as miraculous cures. All this, Drewermann writes, resembles events and acts in Jesus's life.⁹⁵ In his view, therefore, the Gospel miracle stories are best understood as literary renderings of experiences of universal inborn patterns of affective-spiritual experience made visible in the material world, condensed into historical moment-events.⁹⁶ In Drewermann's view, then, even if the story of a miraculous cure were a fabrication in its literal meaning, it would be a true image of the transformational dynamic of an actually and autonomously existing and acting spiritual energy pattern.

The research on shamanism in remote locations that began in the second half of the nineteenth century is collected and analysed in Mircea Eliade's seminal study *Le Chamanisme* (1951).⁹⁷ He defined shamans as masters of the 'archaic techniques of ecstasy' or alternate consciousness in making magical flights to the spirit world to retrieve lost souls and gave as some of their characteristics the mastery of fire, the experience of an initiatory process that includes a mystical death-experience of dismemberment and resurrection, and the performing of extraordinary feats with the aid of animal spirit guides. Today, shamanism as the strategy of an individual mediating for his clients or community between the spiritual and the secular world in symbolic ways is no longer thought by everyone to occur only in Siberian and other archaic societies and with exotic paraphernalia and rituals.

Ruth-Inge Heinze, in her very informative *Shamans of the 20th Century* (1991), notes that Eliade's criteria do not all apply to many shamans today. She lists the essential characteristics of the 122 present-day shamans whom she has personally interviewed on all continents as

Geheimnis des Daseins in de ewigen Bildern der Religion zu öffnen, die Grundlage für das Wunder der Heilung in der Kraft des Glaubens'.

⁹⁴ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 79–95.

⁹⁵ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 94–95.

⁹⁶ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 42, 241–43. This view resembles that of Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, pp. 268–70.

⁹⁷ Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*.

1. accessing and exiting alternate states of consciousness, such as visionary and divinatory perception and trances, at will;
2. fulfilling needs of their community which are otherwise not met; and
3. mediating between the sacred and the profane, making the invisible visible, and using symbols and rituals to encode the ineffable messages from the spiritual world.⁹⁸

The central cross-cultural recurrent symbol in shamanism, she writes, is still the Centre of the World or *axis mundi*, symbolized by the World Tree (its equivalent in Judaeo-Christian thought being the Tree of Life), ladder, pillar, or Mountain — a major archetypal symbol.⁹⁹ In shamanic cures, the patients are led by the healer to this Centre of the World, in which their own centre is embedded, to recover what is often described as their 'lost soul'. That condition, a loss of contact with the affective dream consciousness through which this centre is accessible, leading to an existential anxiety, would be the essence of all illness and all problems.¹⁰⁰ The contemporary practitioners whom Heinze describes as shamans operate today in their own, often improvised, ways and are otherwise active in all professions including law, government, and theatre, in modern cities as well as rural settings, with no indications of being 'fantasy-prone'.¹⁰¹ 'The main feat of shamanic trance', she writes, 'is that the shaman shifts the attention of those present to a level where healing can occur and solutions to acute problems be found'; these feats are frequently understood as miracles.¹⁰²

The level at which healing can occur, she writes, is that of the unconscious, the dream or imagistic awareness, in which the reduced level of sensory awareness and conscious thinking means that these do not compete with attention to upcoming mental images and their dynamics. This state can be accessed by meditation or by strategies such as fasting, sleep deprivation, continuous drumming, chanting, and/or sensory and physical deprivation or extreme exertion.¹⁰³ As will be seen, shamans can combine this state with mental lucidity and dialogue with others present. Drewermann too, like James, describes this affective mode of the imagistic or dream

⁹⁸ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, p. 13. See also *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on the Study of Shamanism and Alternate Modes of Healing*, ed. by Heinze.

⁹⁹ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, pp. 185–89.

¹⁰⁰ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 93.

¹⁰¹ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, pp. 165–66.

¹⁰² Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, p. 168.

¹⁰³ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, pp. 157–68.

consciousness as the one through which, in his view, we are connected to an omnipresent but invisible spiritual reality.¹⁰⁴ As already indicated, the images through which this spiritual reality is perceived vary with each culture. Heinze observes that shamans, so as to be understood by their clients, therefore adapt their strategies of healing to the needs and ideologies of the religious and social context in which they work.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, modern urban shamans in large political units dominated by a particular world religion would operate in different ways from those in smaller hunter-gatherer, nomadic-pastoral, or agricultural societies, each contacting their perceived spiritual universes through the dream or imagistic mode. As will be seen below, the early twentieth-century first-person report about the life of a Native American shaman, Black Elk, as transcribed by John G. Neihardt, poet and historian of Native Americans — brought forward by Drewermann — is especially revealing. His rendering shows from the inside and with particular detail how a boy of nine among the Oglala Sioux received a visionary call to healing from his tribe's spiritual universe during a twelve-day coma in a near-mortal illness, and how he later created its practical healing ritual form by symbolically re-enacting the images and advice he had seen in collective dances and in individual healing sessions.¹⁰⁶ It will be seen that some of Martin's experiences and deeds fit into this schema.

Drewermann notes, however, that there is one important difference between Jesus's cures and those of shamans. Jesus would have healed in a non-ritual manner by inspiring persons through word and deed to trust and believe in his own vision of the healing Kingdom of God: this belief was the 'faith' that cured them. Instead of letting the person be led by other healing images, therefore, Jesus made the cure one of a personal encounter with himself as the visible image and embodiment of the Centre of reality, a centre also reflected in a person's deepest sense of selfhood, which must be recovered in trust before healing can take place. In Jesus's cures, the universal archetypes would appear only in the morphology of the ailments — in his view also, conversion symptoms or physical concretizations of patterns of anxiety and fear — and their cures.¹⁰⁷

Drewermann's view of healing as taking place through the imagination is corroborated by the clinical findings of a significant number of representatives of the psychological-medical community. In the same year that his massively erudite

¹⁰⁴ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 129.

¹⁰⁵ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*.

¹⁰⁷ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 133–41.

volumes appeared, an American psychotherapist working with visualization techniques, Jeanne Achterberg, published a remarkable study, *Imagery in Healing: Shamanism and Modern Medicine* (1985), in which she details what various types of guided meditative imaging therapies can do in clinically controlled circumstances to heal specific ills of the mind and body. The model for this therapy is shamanism:

Shamanism *is* the medicine of the imagination. The shaman is ubiquitous throughout time, throughout the world. Shamanism is the most widely practiced type of medicine on the planet, particularly for serious illnesses. The shamans are the ones who are said to understand, in a spiritual way, the nexus of the mind, the body and the soul [...]. The traditional concept of shamanism would place it within the classification of *transpersonal healing* [...]. However, *preverbal imagery* plays a strong role as well. The shamans' ritual work has a direct therapeutic effect on the patient by creating vivid images, and by inducing altered states of consciousness conducive to self-healing.¹⁰⁸ (emphasis added)

Preverbal imagery is that which accesses or works from out of the dream level of consciousness without the mediation of words. Thus the visualization of a certain body part, it is now known, increases the blood flow into it, whereby oxygen and nutrients carry away toxins and nourish the cells.¹⁰⁹ Achterberg explains, however, that this healing also happens because images

communicate with tissues and organs, even cells, to effect a change. The communication can be deliberate or not. It is preverbal in the sense that it probably evolved much earlier than language, and uses different neural pathways for the transmission of its information.¹¹⁰

An image-thought, she writes, is an electrochemical event woven into the fabric of the brain and the body, and images are the language that the body's systems, voluntary and involuntary, understand and respond to.¹¹¹ Lewis Thomas is cited in this connection as saying that there is 'a kind of superintelligence that exists in each of us, infinitely smarter and possessed of technical know-how far beyond our present understanding'.¹¹² Thus Achterberg describes many effective uses of mental images, including one astounding clinical observation of a meditation that visualized the precise movement of the specific molecules that would be necessary to heal an internal ailment — previously ascertained through meticulous biomedical research — as actually doing the job.¹¹³ As also indicated, there is now scientifically verified

¹⁰⁸ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, p. 146.

¹¹⁰ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, p. 5.

¹¹¹ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, pp. 9, 99.

¹¹² Cited in Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, p. 193.

¹¹³ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, p. 200.

evidence, then, of how affectively visualizing or enacting healing images — as is done, respectively, in meditative psychotherapies as well as in shamanic ritual — can actually produce physical results. Whereas some would regard this as a purely biological process,¹¹⁴ Kelsey and Drewermann (following Jung) regard it as at the same time the activation of innate energy patterns that have a life of their own and over which we have only limited control.¹¹⁵

'Understanding God's Goodness in his Deed'

Can shamanic patterns be discerned in Martin's life and miracles? To begin with the pattern of his life, what Sulpicius continually stresses as his total immersion in Christ — as in, 'never did he speak of anything other than Christ'¹¹⁶ — resembles the shaman's relation with his spirit guide. Following Drewermann, we might understand this as Martin's reflecting 'the image' of Christ through which people could reach and connect with him as the Creative Centre of the cosmos, whose image is reflected in their own creative centre.¹¹⁷ Martin, it is said, never stopped praying to Christ: 'even when he seemed to be doing something else, he was always praying'.¹¹⁸ In this, although following the apostolic injunction to 'continue steadfastly in prayer' (Colossians 4. 2), I suggest that he was also maintaining — like a shaman, alongside his ordinary consciousness — a non-everyday, non-common-sense, consciousness that connected him to the spiritual world. We shall see, moreover, that Martin manifested what might be regarded as a 'mastery' over fire and that, although it cannot be visualized as dismemberment, he — like some but not all shamans — also had a victorious encounter with death which for him could have functioned as an initiation into the consciousness of his powers.

As Sulpicius tells it, Martin appears to have been naturally and intensely aware of the spiritual dimension at an early age:

almost from his earliest years the holy childhood of this noble boy aspired to the divine service, for when he was ten he fled into a church against his parents' wishes and asked to

¹¹⁴ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, p. 179.

¹¹⁵ Kelsey, *The Other Side of Silence*, p. 179.

¹¹⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXVII. 1, SC, 133, p. 314: 'numquam in illius ore nisi Christus'.

¹¹⁷ Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, p. 120, suggests something similar.

¹¹⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXVI. 4, SC, 133, p. 314: 'etiam dum aliud agere videretur, semper orabat'.

be made a catechumen. Soon, in an admirable way wholly turned towards the work of God, he wished to live in the desert at the age of twelve, and would have carried out his wish had his tender age not been an impediment. Thus, with his heart constantly yearning for monasteries or the Church, he prepared himself already in boyhood for that which he would later devoutly carry out.¹¹⁹

Fontaine has pointed out that the ‘constantia’ (stability) which Sulpicius here attributes to Martin was an antique biographical model that probably masked what was a gradual development in Martin’s view of his life and calling.¹²⁰ As the son of a tribune, he had been forced to join the Roman army, and he was still a soldier when he met, at the gate of a wintry Amiens, the naked beggar whom everyone else had passed by. As is well known, he cut his cloak in half to give one part to the unfortunate man.¹²¹ Very significantly, already here Sulpicius refers to Martin as ‘vir Deo plenus’ (man filled with God),¹²² in fact an image of (benign) possession, a phenomenon that is characteristic of shamanism.¹²³

Although Heinze points out that not all (contemporary) shamans receive a ‘call’,¹²⁴ Martin’s dream the following night may be understood as having been the first meeting with the one whom he regarded as the equivalent of his spirit guide: Christ. For Christ then appeared to him dressed in the half of the cloak which Martin had given to the beggar, saying that he himself had been dressed in the naked man¹²⁵ — in essence an invitation to Martin to continue to show this compassion to the needy on earth. Instead of letting this recognition seduce him to pride, Martin, ‘bonitatem Dei in suo opere cognoscens’ (understanding God’s goodness in his deed),¹²⁶ sought baptism. The just-quoted phrase is easy to

¹¹⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, II. 2–4, SC, 133, p. 254: ‘a primis fere annis divinam potius servitutem sacra inlustris pueri spiravit infantia. Nam cum esset annorum decem, invitis parentibus ad ecclesiam confugit seque catechumenum fieri postulavit. Mox mirum in modum totus in Dei opere conversus, cum esset annorum duodecim, eremum concupivit, fecissetque votis satis, si aetatis infirmitas non fuisset impedimento. Animus tamen, aut circa monasteria aut circa ecclesiam semper intentus, meditabatur adhuc in aetate puerili quod postea devotus inplevit.’

¹²⁰ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 63–64.

¹²¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 1–2, SC, 133, pp. 256–58.

¹²² Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 1, SC, 133, p. 256.

¹²³ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, p. 9 and often. Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, p. 235, points to other forms of religious possession in antiquity.

¹²⁴ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, pp. 146–49. Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l’extase*, pp. 21–43, describes the recruitment of shamans.

¹²⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 3–4, SC, 133, p. 258.

¹²⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 5, SC, 133, p. 258.

misunderstand. The identity of Christ with God is taken for granted, and the adjective 'suus' (his) refers to the immediately preceding person: God. What specific goodness did Martin understand? Christ's confirming words to Martin resemble the Father's voice from heaven after Jesus's baptism by John, saying that he was well pleased with him.¹²⁷ I would suggest, therefore, that Sulpicius's somewhat obscure phrasing points to Martin's then similarly having sensed that he had received a call to service. After having quit the army as soon as he could in 356, Martin sought out Bishop Hilary of Poitiers, known for his skill in literature and theology, as his earthly teacher, who wisely ordained the former soldier as an exorcist.¹²⁸ For it must have been evident from the start that Martin had the gift of discerning spirits. As is obvious in all shamanic biographies, the discernment and influencing of spiritual powers and entities is typical for them.¹²⁹

After converting his mother and attempting to begin a hermit's life in various other places because his teacher Hilary was in (temporary) exile in the east, Martin and a companion priest retired to the island of Galinara in the Adriatic Sea. Living there, like the Egyptian ascetics, on roots and herbs, he one day consumed a hellebore root and fell mortally ill. Sulpicius, ostensibly thinking only of someone who is already a man of power and remembering Jesus's advice to the disciples that they need fear no poison (Mark 16. 17–18), then uses only one sentence to describe what cannot but have been a profoundly transforming experience for the young man: 'But while the force of the poison grew in him and he had already begun to feel the nearness of death, he repelled the threatening danger by prayer, and all pain fled at once.'¹³⁰ Fontaine regards the military, aggressive stance towards the affliction as that of Martin's habitual spiritual combat, and the instantaneous disappearance of the condition as pointing to its being understood in some sense as possession by an evil spirit.¹³¹ However, the 'instant' cure can also be understood as a literary condensation, embellishing and exaggerating for effect, or conforming to traditional models. I would suggest, moreover, that Martin's recovery is likely to have been somewhat lengthier and extremely strenuous, and that it may have been something like a transforming near-death experience of the other world as

¹²⁷ Luke 3. 22, as indicated by Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 87.

¹²⁸ See Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 134–48.

¹²⁹ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, passim.

¹³⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VI. 6, SC, 133, p. 266: 'Sed cum vim veneni in se grassantis vicina iam morte sensisset, imminens periculum oratione repulit statimque omnis dolor fugatus est.'

¹³¹ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 134, pp. 601–04.

described in modern literature,¹³² of which the shaman's initiatory dream or vision would be a special type. The shaman Black Elk's initiatory dream took place while he was ill and in a twelve-day coma: it was a journey to the spiritual world that provided him with the symbolic keys to healing his tribe, and he woke up cured. Martin's sensing the imminence of death would at least have lifted him out of all normal habits and everyday concerns into an altered, heightened state of consciousness. He may also have had visions of the spiritual world which he did not mention because, as Sulpicius reports elsewhere, the saint was reluctant to speak about his experiences. Whatever in fact happened, it may well have been through this experience and its outcome that Martin began to realize that he could access Christ's power to heal through prayer. It could thus have functioned as the second part of the initiation into his calling.¹³³

'Conceiving the Holy Spirit with his Whole Mind'

After his return from exile, Hilary helped Martin set up the first monastery in Gaul at Ligugé, near Poitiers, and his very first miracle occurred there: the resurrection of a dead unbaptized catechumen, who afterwards reported it as a near-death or out-of-body experience.¹³⁴ Christ had raised both the youth at Nain and Lazarus at once by verbal command (Luke 7. 14; John 11. 1–12), but Martin's first resuscitation looks like a spontaneous act — formally similar to our modern resuscitation technique — that, intentionally or not, resembles the prophet Elijah's resuscitation of the widow's son,¹³⁵ and it took two hours. Seeing the monks standing weeping around the young man who had expired during his brief absence from the monastery,

Martin ran towards him weeping and wailing. Then, however, conceiving (*concipiens*) the Holy Spirit with his whole mind, he ordered the others to remove themselves from the cell in which the corpse lay and, after the doors had been bolted, he prostrated himself upon the soulless body of the dead brother. And when he had thus lain in prayer for some time and had sensed through the Spirit that the power of the Lord was present, he raised himself up a little, and fixing his eyes upon the face of the dead boy, fearlessly awaited the outcome of his prayer and the arrival of the Lord's compassion. Hardly two hours had passed when

¹³² Van Lommel, *Eindeloos bewustzijn*.

¹³³ Cf. Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*, pp. 44–69, on initiatory illnesses of shamans.

¹³⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VII. 6, SC, 133, p. 268.

¹³⁵ I Kings 17. 17–24; cf. II Kings 4. 31–37. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 198–200, suggests additional parallels.

he saw the dead boy slowly begin to move all his limbs and his unfastened eyes blink while they were recovering their sight.¹³⁶

Essential here is not whether or not the catechumen's state was a coma mistaken for death but what Martin and his monks perceived to happen and Sulpicius later believed to have happened: Martin's acute compassion, his tears, and his no doubt fervent prayer — all these perhaps inducing an altered state of consciousness; then his experiencing himself as filled with the Holy Spirit and 'the power of the Lord', which — through Martin's touch — effected the catechumen's gradual revival. Did Martin perhaps also massage the boy and/or perform something resembling what we today call cardiac-pulmonary resuscitation, as appears to be suggested by the gestures in a similar resuscitation by the prophet Elisha (II Kings 4. 31–37)? As will be seen, elsewhere too one strongly suspects that Sulpicius simply omits mundane details to make an event seem more sudden and thus miraculous. At the same time, however, he may have intended his educated readers to recognize a 'mystery' — Christ's saving of mankind from eternal death — here being visibly enacted in earthly time. If so, Martin would have been improvising upon and enacting his dream and perhaps letting the memory of Elijah's and Elisha's deeds show him how to do it.

Does Sulpicius's phrase 'conceiving the Holy Spirit with his whole mind' indicate that the saint went into an altered state of consciousness? If the description goes back to Martin's own report of the event, 'concupiens' can here be understood as simply another way of saying 'accipiens' (receiving) the Holy Spirit as the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2. 2–4). The classical meanings of 'concupere' are 'to contain', 'to draw in', 'to conceive', 'to feel', 'to grasp or to lay hold of', as well as 'to receive'.¹³⁷ Specifically Christian meanings can also be 'to absorb', 'to conceive or invent', and 'to meditate upon'.¹³⁸ Fontaine points to the fact that Sulpicius uses the verb 'concupere' earlier in the sense of conceiving a plan or intention, as well as eleven other times in the *Life*, none of which have to do with an infusion of the

¹³⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VII. 3, SC, 133, p. 268: 'Martinus flens et eiulans occurrit. Tum vero, tota sanctum spiritum mente concipiens, egredi cellulam, in qua corpus iacebat, ceteros iubet, ac foribus obseratis super exanimata defuncti fratris membra prosternitur. Et cum aliquandiu orationi incubisset sensissetque per spiritum Domini adesse virtutem, erectus paululum et in defuncti ora defixus, orationis suae ac misericordiae Domini intrepidus expectabat eventum. Vixque duarum fere horarum spatium intercesserat, videt defunctum paulatim membris omnibus commoveri et laxatis in usum videndi palpitare luminibus.'

¹³⁷ *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, IV, cols 54–62.

¹³⁸ Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, p. 188.

Holy Spirit.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, he does suggest that Sulpicius may have remembered the phrase under scrutiny from Lucan's description of a Delphian prophetess's reception of the god Apollo, who would inspire her prophecy — 'concepit pectore numen' (her heart enveloped the divinity) — and that, in Sulpicius's view, this reminiscence would have given his hero 'an antique as well as Christian grandeur'.¹⁴⁰ For the phenomenon of benign possession is traceable in Greek and Roman literature¹⁴¹ as well as in prophets such as Balaam and Elisha in the Bible.¹⁴²

Jerome, however, connects 'mente concipere deum' (conceiving God with/through the mind) with something subsequently engendered, as in 'the sons of Israel who conceived God in their minds, [presented] spiritual offers with the fruits and virtues of their soul in pure vessels, that is in their holy bodies'.¹⁴³ Here, the fruits and virtues of the soul may have been 'born' through the Holy Spirit and they in turn resulted in the presentation of the offers. We shall see a similar meaning in Paulinus of Nola's use of the term. Were these or similar passages Sulpicius's model? I would suggest, in addition, that his no doubt intentional use of 'concipiens' also points to a kind of receiving that has an active component: that of an active taking or drawing in. And the phrase 'with his whole mind' could point to Martin's actively opening all of it to the incoming Spirit, thereby embracing or encompassing it, as it were, as in the classical sense of 'concupio': holding together, containing. A passage in Dracontius's *Praises of God*, for instance, reads: 'whereas the skies, the lands, the sea and the space of the air cannot contain you [the Creator God], you lodge yourself in the modest heart of the human breast, conceived/encompassed by the faithful mind'.¹⁴⁴ Martin's 'conceiving' the Holy Spirit, then, would be an active embracing of the inflowing Holy Spirit, the precise equivalent of Sulpicius's characterization of the saint elsewhere as 'a man full of God'.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VI. 3, cited by Fontaine, SC, 134, p. 618, n. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Lucan, *Pharsala*, 5. 163, cited by Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 134, p. 618, n. 1, and pp. 618–19, respectively.

¹⁴¹ Pearson, 'Possession (Greek and Roman)'; Barton, 'Possession (Semitic and Christian)'.

¹⁴² Pearson, 'Possession (Greek and Roman)', pp. 134–35.

¹⁴³ Jerome, *Commentarius in Esaïam*, XVIII. 66. 21, lines 13–16, CCSL, 73A, p. 793: 'offerunt [...] filii Israel qui mente concipiunt deum, hostias spiritalis cum fructibus atque virtutibus animae suae in vasis mundis, hoc est in sanctis corporibus'.

¹⁴⁴ Blossius Aemilius Dracontius, *Laudes Dei*, ed. by Moussy and Camus, II, 224: 'cum te non caperent caeli terraeque fretumque | aeris et spatium, modica te corde reponis | pectoris humani conceptus mente fidei'.

¹⁴⁵ Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, pp. 72–85, gives examples of what he calls 'mystic possession'.

Agnes Sanford's book may help to translate Martin's experience and deed into a for us more familiar terminology. Her account of her own methods and experiences gives a particularly detailed inside look into modern faith healing. Standing in the same Christian tradition, much of what she tells us, in her conversational and practical way, about her own manner of curing not only consistently resembles the cures of other modern faith healers but is also similar to what Sulpicius relates about Martin. Thus love and forgiveness are central and, when properly connected, she too, as we saw, describes her state as 'porous like a sponge and filled with God'.¹⁴⁶ In a laying-on of hands that a little girl experienced as 'hot', Sanford reports that she perceived through her hands and arms 'the flow of the invisible force that caused the heat'.¹⁴⁷ Sanford's following general description of healing may describe what Sulpicius's description left out:

The essence of all healing is to become so immersed in the being of God that one forgets himself entirely. [...] He immerses himself first in God and then in his patient. For he will find himself at the end of his prayer listening intently, as it were, to the patient's body. His fingers will report to him the increased effort of the bodily forces. He will feel the swift flow of blood, the twitching of stimulated nerves. [...] He has made a thought-track between his spirit, subconscious mind and body, and the body, the subconscious mind and body of the patient. Neither patient nor doctor may know the exact condition of the patient. But that inner control center, the subconscious mind, is in possession of the facts. And through the telephone-wires of the nerves, the subconscious mind of the one who prays often registers these facts. Out of this submerged consciousness the conscious mind picks them up.¹⁴⁸

Elsewhere summarizing what happens in a cure, she writes sensibly:

Knowing then that we are part of God, that his life within us is an active energy and that He works through the laws of our bodies, let us study to adjust and conform ourselves to those laws. When we do this with understanding and common-sense, we can speed up the natural healing forces of the body.¹⁴⁹

Thereupon answering critics, she says: 'Those who really experiment with prayer know that it is far more than auto-suggestion. It is the inner being that is part of God speaking to the framework of flesh.'¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 39–59, 61, respectively.

¹⁴⁷ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 18–19. Cf. Harpur, *Uncommon Touch*, p. 137 and often. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, p. 33, reports a similar experience, described as like that of an electric current.

¹⁴⁸ Sanford, *Healing Light*, p. 110. Similarly Harpur, *Uncommon Touch*, pp. 182–83. Krieger, *Therapeutic Touch*, describes this approach at length.

¹⁴⁹ Sanford, *Healing Light*, p. 21.

¹⁵⁰ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 25–26.

As she consistently emphasizes, however, being loving and forgiving, becoming still and connecting with God, and praying with words is only half of what the healer, or the patient himself, is to do. The other, necessary, half of the healing process is *the mental visualization of the body part as being at that moment suffused with a healing light and/or as being re-created into the image of the shining human image of Christ*.¹⁵¹ The human figure of Christ shining with and transmitting a creative Light that is healing love — which she imagines as an actual, yet to be registered and measured, form of cosmic vibration or energy¹⁵² — is the central image in Sanford's healing practice. Her silent visualization of this image as part of her prayer, whether or not supported by power flowing through the touch of her hands, would be received and understood by the patient's unconscious mind and would be directed from there to the body as the blueprint for its action. Sanford's evidently very effective healing thus combined faith in divine power with a practical ('common-sense') view of the body's workings that included what Achterberg would later record about healing through mental imagery. All of Sanford's practical observations, including that of the effectiveness of the patient's imaging of a white light shining through the afflicted body part, are in fact confirmed by Achterberg's clinical ones.¹⁵³ In Martin's resurrection of the dead (or comatose) catechumen, it could have been the effect of the saint's own mental imaging while continuing to look intently at the catechumen's face, as well as his transmission of power through touch, that were involved; in other cures, as will be seen, the effective cooperation of the patient's own mental imaging — conscious or unconscious¹⁵⁴ — is possible and even probable.

Black Elk: 'I Could Feel the Power Coming Through Me'

However much Martin's healing strategies may, in essence, have resembled those of Sanford, he is very unlikely to have analysed them in such a detached and practical manner. Instead, his state of mind before and during the resuscitation appears to resemble the kind of *voluntary* (semi-)trance or dream state in which present-day shamans too connect with their spirit world to conduct their symbolic ritual

¹⁵¹ As in Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 13, 22–23, 24, 36, 54–55, 56, 87.

¹⁵² Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 17–18, 26–28. Cf. Harpur, *Uncommon Touch*, pp. 100–14.

¹⁵³ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, e.g. pp. 104 and 171 (white light), 103 and 134 (hope and unbridled faith give messages to the body).

¹⁵⁴ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, p. 115.

healing. Let us now therefore compare Martin's experience with Neihardt's transcription of the Sioux shaman Black Elk's story about how, in the late nineteenth century, he performed *his* first cure. Since, in its essentials, the strategy resembles that of many different shamanic rituals described elsewhere, I am inclined to accept it as a basically true report, whatever small details may have been modified or omitted in the interest of readability by the well-meaning poet-historian.¹⁵⁵ What makes this report especially revealing, however, is the first-person perspective. For the shaman here admittedly *invents as he goes along* the way in which he re-enacts and thereby actualizes the part, in his great imaged vision of the *real* reality underlying its shadow in the visible world, that pertains to personal healing.¹⁵⁶ It was to restore in every way the well-being of his people, who were then increasingly being driven out of their lands and hunting grounds by westward-moving white settlers and gold-seekers.¹⁵⁷

His vision's central symbol, the blossoming tree with birds fluttering happily around it, represented his tribe's being spiritually connected with the centre of the world which is the meeting point of its four quarters with the earth below and the sky above — each imaged as 'Grandfathers' with their own specific colours and animals. As we saw, the Tree of the World — resembling what will be seen in Sedulius's poem to be the Christian equivalent of the Cross and the Tree of Life — has been recognized in one form or another as a constant symbol in shamanic cosmology.¹⁵⁸ Black Elk was to be helped by an eagle to lead his people back to the good red (south–north) road that led to this blossoming tree. He had not dared to tell anyone about his experience however until, at age sixteen, he became ill. A medicine man friend in whom he finally confided then told him that if he wished to get well it was time to tell his people about his vision, and to begin carrying out his task. Accordingly, Black Elk created sacred dances in which he and his people impersonated the actors and animals in the vision, and in singing the songs which he had learned in it, they re-enacted some of its essential themes.¹⁵⁹ After two of these sacred dances, he was suddenly moved to go and find in an intuitive way the specific healing herb which he had been given in the great vision, in the place where, in a

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Victor Deloria, Jr, 'Introduction', in Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. xiv. For its context, see Gill, 'Shamanism: North American Shamanism', pp. 8287–90.

¹⁵⁶ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 169.

¹⁵⁷ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, pp. 20–47.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*, pp. 218–22.

¹⁵⁹ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, pp. 159–76.

more recent vision, he had seen it grow. While sitting on a bluff with a medicine man friend, and singing sacred songs which he had learned in the vision, Black Elk looked for and found the herb near what he discerned as significant movements of animals in their natural environment. As he describes the plant, it can be understood as a miniature image of the spiritual universe he had seen: representing the central tree, it had flowers in the colours of the four quarters of the world — blue, white, red, and yellow, representing west, north, south, and east: each contributing their specific energies to the whole — that sent out rays into the whole world. In short, it connected man with the real reality of which, as Black Elk had understood, the earthly part is but a darkish shadow: the spiritual universe in which all creatures are related to and support each other through a blossoming Centre.¹⁶⁰

The very next evening a father, Cuts-to-Pieces, came to him to ask him, since he was said to have power through the dances, to cure his boy who had been sick for a long time.¹⁶¹ Black Elk told him that if he really wanted help, he should go home and bring him back a pipe with an eagle feather on it, for in the great vision he had been given a pipe and he himself had been identified with an eagle. 'While he was gone,' Black Elk reminisces, 'I thought about what I had to do; and I was afraid, because I had never cured anybody yet with my power, and I was very sorry for Cuts-to-Pieces. I prayed hard for help.'¹⁶² Considering what has been noted about shamans healing in a 'dream' or trance state, it is worth noting that Black Elk mentions only 'hard' praying as a preparation; presumably the prayer mode would have put him in the 'dream' state that made him able to access his vision's spiritual reality — just as it did with Martin. After letting Cuts-to-Pieces give him the pipe in a movement from left to right — a symbolic movement later explained as that of human life from south (source of life), to west (setting sun), north (old age), east (source of light and understanding), back to south (give back life to life), thereby connecting with this life — he sent for the medicine man One Side to come and help him and went to the boy's home, together with his father and mother; his friend Standing Bear was already there.

They entered at the south side of the tepee and went around it from left to right, stopping on the west side; the boy lay on the north-east side. Black Elk first offered the pipe to the Six Powers: the four corners of the earth and the spirit of the Earth and of the Sky (those present would have recognized the symbolism because of the dances).

¹⁶⁰ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 169.

¹⁶¹ The story of the first cure: Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, pp. 194–203.

¹⁶² Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 198.

Then I passed it, and we all smoked. After that I began to make a rumbling thunder sound on the drum. You know, when the power of the west [thunderstorms with welcome rain] comes to the two-leggeds, it comes with rumbling, and when it has passed, everything lifts up its head and is glad and there is greenness. So I made this rumbling sound. Also, the voice of the drum is an offering to the Spirit of the World. Its sound arouses the mind and makes men feel the mystery and power of things.¹⁶³

Having the pipe, the drum, and the four-rayed herb already, Black Elk asked for a wooden cup full of water (seen in his vision) and for an eagle-bone whistle, 'which was for the spotted eagle of my great vision. They placed the cup of water in front of me; and then I had to think awhile, because I had never done this before and I was in doubt'.¹⁶⁴

Then he gave the whistle to One Side and told him how to help, and gave the pipe, filled with shredded red willow bark (red was the colour of life), to the young daughter of Cuts-to-Pieces, telling her to hold it

just as I had seen the virgin of the east holding it in my great vision. Everything was ready now, so I made a low thunder on the drum, keeping time as I sent forth a voice [i.e. a prayer]. Four times I cried 'Hey-a-a hey', drumming as I cried out to the Spirit of the World, and while I was doing this I could feel the power coming through me from my feet up, and I knew that I could help the sick little boy.

I kept on sending a voice, while I made low thunder on the drum, saying: 'My Grandfather, Great Spirit, you are the only one and to no other can any one send voices. You have made everything, they say, and you have made it good and beautiful. [...] The two-leggeds are in despair. For them, my Grandfather, I send a voice to you. You have said this to me: The weak shall walk. In the vision you have taken me to the center of the world and there you have shown me the power to make over. The water in the cup that you have given me, by its power shall the dying live. The herb that you have shown me, through its power shall the feeble walk upright. From where we are always facing (the south), behold, a virgin shall appear, walking the good red road, offering the pipe as she walks, and here also is the power of the flowering tree. From where the Giant lives [the north], you have given me a sacred cleansing wind, and where this wind passes the weak shall have strength. You have said this to me. To you and all your powers and to Mother Earth I send a voice for help.'¹⁶⁵

Having been facing the west during this, he then walked to the north, went on to the east, and stopped in the south,

where the source of all life is and where the good red road begins. Standing there, I sang thus:

¹⁶³ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 199.

¹⁶⁴ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 200.

¹⁶⁵ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 201.

'In a sacred manner I have made them walk.
 A sacred nation lies low.
 In a sacred manner I have made them walk.
 A sacred two-legged, he lies low.
 In a sacred manner, he shall walk.'

While I was singing this I could feel something queer all through my body, something that make me want to cry for all unhappy things, and there were tears on my face.¹⁶⁶

Then he walked to the west, lit the pipe, offered it to the powers, took a whiff, and then passed it around.

When I looked at the sick little boy again, he smiled at me, and I could feel that the power was getting stronger. I next took the cup of water, drank a little of it, and went around to where the sick little boy was. Standing before him, I stamped the earth four times. Then, putting my mouth to the pit of his stomach, I drew through him the cleansing wind of the north. I next chewed some of the herb and put it in the water, afterward blowing some of it on the boy and to the four quarters. The cup with the rest of the water I gave to the virgin, who gave it to the little boy to drink. Then I told the virgin to help the little boy stand up and to walk around the circle with him, beginning at the south, the source of life. He was very poor and weak, but with the virgin's help he did this. Then I went away.¹⁶⁷

The next day Cuts-to-Pieces came to say that the boy was sitting up and eating again; four days later he was walking around. He regained his health and lived to be thirty. Black Elk concludes: 'When the people heard about how the little boy was cured, many came to me for help, and I was busy most of the time.'¹⁶⁸

This detailed report makes one wonder if Sulpicius's story of Martin's first cure/resuscitation is the much-reduced literary precipitate of a similar process, remembered after many years and in a different religious idiom, much of which the saint may have preferred to keep to himself. As will be seen in a later chapter, in early fifth-century north Africa cures could be associated with the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy about the Day of the Lord, which sounds very much like what the Grandfather said to Black Elk: 'He [God] will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame man shall leap like the hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy' (Isaiah 35. 4–6). Perhaps Martin, like Ambrose, regarded the grace of the miracle as that of Christ preceding his imminent return.

¹⁶⁶ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 202.

¹⁶⁷ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 203.

¹⁶⁸ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 203.

'His Whole Being Trembled'

The perception of a first miracle may precipitate the seeing of more of them.¹⁶⁹ In other words, as Clifford Geertz famously stated, a signal event in the religious sphere tends subsequently not only to be understood as a *model of* reality — here, Martin being a latter-day apostle capable of performing miracles — but also to function as a *model for* reproducing this reality in Martin's own experience and in that of his environment.¹⁷⁰ Martin may also have been influenced by his teacher Hilary of Poitiers who described Christ as healing everyone, without art or technique, solely through the power of his word, saying, 'Let [our] spirit look for him, expect him, at whose approach fever dies down, blindness stops, paralysis disappears, [and] death does not take possession'.¹⁷¹ After this resuscitation, Martin, as we saw focusing his whole being upon the presence of Christ, could now believe himself, and be believed, to be able to bring Christ's healing power to the spot. He had one handicap, however: as a former Pannonian soldier, he not only did not have an educated Gallo-Roman's oratorical training to help him with preaching, but also did not have knowledge of the Celtic language spoken in the countryside; thus he needed to get his message across by acts and gestures. As will be seen, the sign of the Cross was his central one:¹⁷² it symbolized, and thereby presenced, Christ's victory over death as healing mankind.¹⁷³

The notion of Martin's sensing himself as a conduit returns in different ways in Sulpicius's texts. Sometimes he appears to have sensed the arrival of the Holy Spirit without special preparation. Sulpicius lets Gallus report that when, on journey to Chartres, Martin and his retinue encountered a large crowd of pagans, 'he felt that something was going [or needed] to be done, and as the Holy Spirit announced itself to him, his whole being trembled'.¹⁷⁴ He thereupon, 'nec mortale sonans' (sounding more than human), first preached to them his 'dream' or vision

¹⁶⁹ Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, p. 122.

¹⁷⁰ Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', p. 93.

¹⁷¹ Hilary of Poitiers (Hilarius Pictaviensis), *Tractatus super psalmos*, XIII. 3, CSEL, 22, p. 81, lines 17–19: 'hunc requirit spiritus, hunc exspectat, ad cuius adventum febris quiesceret, caecitas desineret, paralysis non esset, mors non occuparet'. Quoted in Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, p. 113.

¹⁷² As also Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, pp. 124–25, 177.

¹⁷³ Cf. Dölger, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Kreuzzeichens IV', pp. 14–16.

¹⁷⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 4. 5, SC, 510, p. 234: 'Sensit Martinus operandum et adnuntiantem sibi spiritu totus infremuit'.

of the true spiritual reality.¹⁷⁵ Fontaine notes that this is the exact expression which Virgil uses of the Cumaean sibyl before, inspired by Apollo, she begins prophesying.¹⁷⁶ The implication, of course, is again benign possession. After the sermon, a woman came towards him carrying her little son who had died shortly before, beseeching him to bring him back to life, and the rest of the crowd supported her request by shouting.

Then Martin, as he told us later, seeing that he would be able to obtain a deed of power for the salvation of those watching, accepted the lifeless body in his own hands. And while everyone watched, he knelt down. After he had finished his prayer, he rose and gave the revived little one back to his mother. Then indeed the whole multitude cried in a shouting that went up to the sky that Christ was God.¹⁷⁷

The miracle, then, proved the truth of what Martin had been telling them, and they all wished to be made Christians. The event may be clarified by what Sanford recorded about a similar modern case.¹⁷⁸ A minister — who may have been Morton Kelsey¹⁷⁹ — who had been called to baptize a baby who had been lying (apparently) dead on a table for half an hour, sensed during the funerary service that the child could live again. Having placed the weeping women at the far side of the room and standing between them and the baby, he laid his hands on the child, dropped a little water into its mouth, and stroked its throat. Then he felt its body slowly growing warm, and at the end of the service it opened its eyes. Sanford says that her minister husband had ‘often’ done something similar.¹⁸⁰

Sulpicius, however, must have assumed that his educated readers would here have remembered Luke’s story of Jesus’s resurrection — by verbal command — of the dead youth being borne on a bier at Nain (Luke 7. 11–17) which is similar: the great crowd and his widowed mother’s only son. When, just before his second

¹⁷⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 4. 5, SC, 510, p. 234: ‘Sensit Martinus operandum et adnuntiante sibi spiritu totus infremuit’.

¹⁷⁶ Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI. 49, cited by Fontaine in *Gallus*, SC, 510, p. 235.

¹⁷⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 4. 7–8, SC, 510, p. 236: ‘Tum Martinus, videns pro expectantium salute, ut postea nobis ipse dicebat, consequi se posse virtutem, defuncti corpus propriis manibus accepit; et cum spectantibus cunctis genua flexisset, ubi consummata oratione surrexit, vivificatum parvulum matri reddit. Tum vero multitudo omnis, in caelum clamore sublato, Christum Deum fateri.’

¹⁷⁸ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 83–84.

¹⁷⁹ The same or a similar incident appears to be described in Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁰ Sanford, *Healing Light*, p. 85.

resurrection, Jesus saw Mary weeping about her dead brother Lazarus, however, he also 'trembled in spirit and was troubled'; later, he wept and again trembled as he approached the tomb to call the man back to life.¹⁸¹ As we saw, like Jesus in the Gospels,¹⁸² the shaman Black Elk also describes feeling the advent of healing power. On another occasion, during a collective dance to access the well-being of his people, he remembers that 'there came a strong shivering all over my body, and I knew that the power was in me';¹⁸³ the next day he had another instructive vision. Trembling has today been listed as one of the common bodily changes that may accompany a state of trance.¹⁸⁴

Sulpicius's descriptions of certain other miracles show, however, that Martin sometimes did exert himself strenuously to obtain a miracle. Stancliffe sees the possible influence here of cases of ascetic practices to induce a divine hearing in the Old Testament, in the apocryphal book of IV Esdras, and in the writings of Tertullian and of certain Greek patristic writers who thought that fasting facilitated the receiving of visions.¹⁸⁵ However, what Martin does also resembles the practices which certain shamans use to enter the altered state of consciousness or trance in which they contact the spirits: focused suggestive attention, pain stimulation, fasting (hypoglycemia and dehydration), seclusion and restricted mobility, visual-sensory deprivation, and sleep deprivation.¹⁸⁶ Black Elk mentions fasting and the sweat lodge as the 'purification' he (as well as the other leading participants) underwent before leading a sacred dance, and as we saw he 'prayed hard' before his first cure.

As for Martin, when the local people violently prevented his planned destruction of a pagan temple at Levroux (*Leprosium*), he spent three days and nights in a goat's hair cloak and covered with ashes, fasting and praying uninterruptedly that divine power might help him to do it.¹⁸⁷ As he later reported the event, two armed angels then appeared to him with lances and told him to go ahead with his project for they would protect him from the peasants while he did it. It has been suggested that these may have been simply armed guards sent by a sympathetic nearby estate

¹⁸¹ John 11. 38: 'rursum fremens in semet ipso'.

¹⁸² For instance, Luke 4. 36, 5. 17, 5. 19, 8. 46, and 9. 1.

¹⁸³ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 240.

¹⁸⁴ Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality*, p. 37, and Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, pp. 58–71.

¹⁸⁵ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 241–43.

¹⁸⁶ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, p. 166.

¹⁸⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XIV. 3–7, SC, 133, p. 284.

owner.¹⁸⁸ The preparation — prayer, sackcloth, dust on the head — as well as the assistance by heavenly warriors resembles that of the Maccabees (II Maccabees 10. 24–31). The next day the crowd watched in stunned abeyance, offering no resistance — presumably while kept in check by the armed ‘angels’ — as he destroyed their altars and statues. Now convinced of the impotence of their erstwhile gods, most of them are said to have converted on the spot.¹⁸⁹ As will be seen below, Martin once began a mass exorcism in the same way. No doubt the saint himself understood his practice as self-humiliation to exert pressure for help upon heaven — the persistent ‘knocking’ upon a friend’s door advised by Christ himself (as in Matthew 7. 7). I would suggest that those around him may also have been impressed or even intimidated by it.

‘He Prayed in an Innocuous Circle of Flames’

Several incidents point to what could be designated as the saint’s — shaman-like — ‘mastery’ of fire.¹⁹⁰ In one of these, he seemed to prevent a fire, lighted by himself, that was consuming a pagan sanctuary from reaching a nearby home by deflecting its course into the wind. Sulpicius describes it as ‘by the power of Martin, the fire burned only where it was commanded’.¹⁹¹ After the *Life* came out, however, Martin’s mastery over fire was questioned by someone who asked why, in one case, he had been unable to protect himself from being burned when a fire broke out in the room in which he was sleeping. Sulpicius felt it necessary to respond to this by a public letter, the first, passionately addressing the unnamed critic as *miser* (wretch) and *stultus* (fool).¹⁹² And he castigated the question as ‘blasphemy’ by pointing not only to the dangers to which the holy apostles too had also been exposed, but even to the Jews mocking Jesus’s apparent impotence on the Cross.¹⁹³ To show how Martin overcame the fire in the end, he then describes the incident.

One winter, having been put up for the night in the sacristy of a church which he was visiting, Martin threw away the soft hay which had been prepared as his bed,

¹⁸⁸ See Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 135, pp. 781–86.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. a similar incident in Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 5. 6–7, SC, 510, pp. 240–42.

¹⁹⁰ See Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l’extase*, p. 369.

¹⁹¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XIV. 2, SC, 133, p. 282: ‘virtute Martini ibi tantum ignis est operatus, ubi iussus est’.

¹⁹² Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, I. 3, 7, SC, 133, pp. 316, 320.

¹⁹³ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, I. 3–6, SC, 133, pp. 316–20.

for he was used to sleeping on the floor. Some of it landed on a piece of cracked pavement under which the heating furnace was burning, and in the middle of the night flames creeping through the cracks caused it to catch fire. Rudely woken up by the unexpected fire, but — as he later told it — ‘especially [...] prevented by the instigation and stirring of the Devil, he turned more slowly than he should have to the aid of prayer’.¹⁹⁴ His first reaction was panic: he tried for some time to escape by unbolting the door. Only when he failed and felt his clothes burning,

he finally came to himself, knowing that his help was not in flight but in the Lord, and seizing the shield of faith [Ephesians 6. 16] and prayer he lay down in the middle of the flames totally turned to the Lord. Then, indeed, the [burning capacity of the] fire was divinely removed and he prayed in an innocuous circle of flames.¹⁹⁵

That expression ‘the shield of faith’ — used in a metaphorical way in the apostolic letter: ‘with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one’ — is here applied to material fire, making clear that it is indeed understood as taking place by a diabolic machination. In this description, the frontier between imagined spiritual phenomena and perceived sensory ones is blurred. When the monks had finally managed to break down the door from the outside and put out the fire, they are said to have found the saint, whom they had believed to be consumed after such a long time, unharmed. The archetype of this miracle is of course that of the three Hebrew youths in the fire who were unharmed because their faith protected them (Daniel 3. 8–30), but characteristically, Sulpicius leaves this implicit; it surfaces only when he refers to this incident again in his second letter.¹⁹⁶ Martin is reported as having said that he felt the fire burning only so long as he, deceived by the Devil, had not turned to prayer; as soon as he had done that, the flames stopped burning and felt as dew instead — as they had for the three youths. It looks as though he thought of and visualized them as he prayed, and probably went into a trance-state which blocked sensations of pain.¹⁹⁷ Sulpicius concludes triumphantly that

¹⁹⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, I. 12, SC, 133, p. 322: ‘maxime [...] diabolo insidiante et urgente praeventus, tardius quam debuit ad orationis confugit auxilium’.

¹⁹⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula* I. 13, SC, 133, p. 322: ‘Tandem in se reversus, non in fuga, sed in Domino sciens esse praesidium, scutum fidei et orationis arripiens mediis flammis totus ad Dominum conversus incubuit. Tum vero divinitus igne submoto, innoxio sibi orbe flammaram, orabat.’

¹⁹⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Epistula*, II. 9, SC, 133, p. 328.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Obeyesekere, *Medusa’s Hair*, passim, describing, and showing in photos between pages 90 and 91, devotees of Sri Lankan gods — no doubt in trance — fire-walking and torturing themselves to please them.

whoever reads these lines should understand that the experienced danger was indeed a trial for Martin, but one that truly proved his sanctity.¹⁹⁸ A psychologist explains that insensitivity to fire can occur through a reflex of general inhibition either through extreme stress or through deep quiescence — both of which could have been involved here — and that it was this that would have enabled the martyrs to die happily while being eaten by lions or burned at the stake.¹⁹⁹ Present-day shamans and yogis can experience the same imperviousness to fire and other physical injuries in states that are in fact self-induced trances, demonstrably altering the body's biochemistry.²⁰⁰ It is known, moreover, that the ancient bacchantes, worshippers regarded as possessed by the god Dionysus or Bacchus, were insensitive to fire,²⁰¹ and the ancient rite of fire-walking is in fact still practised in many parts of the world today.²⁰²

Martin's dream of Christ, then, his overcoming of a mortal illness through prayer, his ability to access healing power or to influence events, if necessary through a previous self-mortification that would have induced an imagistic or dream state of consciousness and perhaps increased his 'spiritual power', and his 'mastery' over fire all resemble constitutive events and acts in the life of the shaman. The culturally conditioned models for his self-understanding, however, were those of Christ, Elijah and Elisha, Daniel, the apostle Paul, the inspired martyrs, and the other-worldly eastern monks.²⁰³ After his own interpretation of his experiences, several other layers of interpretation must have transformed the final report: the saint's disciples will have magnified his words and acts in the direction he indicated and perhaps added what they supposed were details he had declined to mention; his popular audiences, on the other hand, will have transmitted their perceptions shaped by the knowledge of other marvels; finally Sulpicius, with his literary education, consciously shaped the written form in which these experiences have come down to us.²⁰⁴ Fontaine notes that, in contrast to the fantastic miracles and apparitions (influenced by popular folklore) that sometimes appear in the Egyptian stories, Martin's encounters with the devil are consistently likened — by Sulpicius?

¹⁹⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini, Epistula*, I. 15, SC, 133, p. 324.

¹⁹⁹ Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, pp. 72–73.

²⁰⁰ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, pp. 13, 20.

²⁰¹ Pearson, 'Possession', p. 127.

²⁰² See Hopkins, 'Fire Walking', and Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair*.

²⁰³ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 116–17.

²⁰⁴ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 185–88.

— to recognizable human figures and situations.²⁰⁵ It is possible that this is the author's stylization of more idiosyncratic experiences that may have occasioned Brictius's accusation, to prevent the reader from also adjudging Martin's visions and apparitions to have been 'deliriums'.

Can shamanic traits also be discerned in Sulpicius's descriptions of the saint's more specific overcomings of evil?

'Various Figures of Evil': Discerning and Overcoming Disabling Patterns

As a former soldier who had not received a classical education like Sulpicius and his friends, Martin has been adjudged to have been above all a man of action and of prayer.²⁰⁶ His continuous state of discerning spirits meant that, like the shaman, he experienced his lifeworld filtered through images of patterns of spiritual energy, understood to be external, objective realities. In other words, his practical action was inspired by, and combined with, continuous 'dreaming'.²⁰⁷ For Martin this was no doubt partly a question of his nature; but it was also a conscious choice, for, as we saw, Sulpicius tells us that he was constantly praying; that is, talking and listening to the Christ within him and acting from there. Therefore, 'the Devil was so conspicuous and subject to his eyes that he was seen by him in whatever image he appeared: whether he remained in his own substance or transformed himself into various figures of Evil'.²⁰⁸ Sulpicius here points ahead to the diabolic apparitions which will not be discussed here. His brief narratives, however, seem to imply that Martin, the former exorcist — like the shaman — also discerned an image-pattern, effect, or materialization of a diabolic dynamic or 'figure of evil' in human afflictions and overcame it by enacting the symbol of Christ's victory on the Cross over the Devil.²⁰⁹ In effect, then, his cures would have been visible re-enactments of this victory as the healing and restoration of humankind that induced a mimetic replication of this in the subject. Jung has said about 'the dogmatic symbol':

²⁰⁵ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, pp. 160–62.

²⁰⁶ Fontaine in *Vita sancti Martini*, SC, 133, p. 139.

²⁰⁷ As also Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, p. 120.

²⁰⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXI. 1, SC, 133, p. 298: 'Diabolum vero ita conspicabilem et subiectum oculis habebat ut, sive se in propria substantia contineret, sive in diversas figuras nequitiae transtulisset, qualibet ab eo sub imagine videretur'.

²⁰⁹ Bietenhard, 'Satan, Beelzebul, Devil, Exorcism', p. 470.

it formulates a tremendous and dangerously decisive psychic experience, fittingly called an 'experience of the Divine', in a way that is tolerable to our human understanding, without either limiting the scope of the experience or doing damage to its overwhelming significance.²¹⁰

Without elaborately psychoanalysing them, as Drewermann does with three of Jesus's cures,²¹¹ a few examples will be given of these disabling patterns and how Martin overcame them.

'A Wretched-looking Face'

In Martin's unprecedented manner of healing of a leper — in the Old Testament the prime image of a state of ritual impurity that meant isolation from society (Leviticus 13. 44) — we see that he too innovated. Unfortunately, it is one of the shortest stories in Sulpicius's collection:

Among the Parisians, as he entered the gate of that city accompanied by large crowds, he [encountered,] kissed and blessed a leper with a wretched-looking face that had horrified everyone. Having been cleansed of all evil at once, the man came to church the next day with a shining skin and gave thanks for the health he had received.²¹²

There is very little literary evidence of leprosy in Gaul in this period.²¹³ Although the bystanders' 'horror' is noted, this leper seems to have walked freely in the city. Jesus had cleansed a leper upon his request by touching him and issuing a verbal command to 'be clean'; he was told to show himself to the priest and offer the gift that Mosaic law demanded 'as a proof to the people' (Matthew 8. 2–4). It is thus 'pollution' that is removed. Mark adds that Jesus had been 'moved with pity' (Mark 1. 41), but there is no mention of a kiss as a healing gesture anywhere in the Bible. As with the naked beggar at Amiens, Martin's act here is an impulse of compassion,

²¹⁰ Jung, 'Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious', p. 11.

²¹¹ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 246–309.

²¹² Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XVIII. 3–4, SC, 133, p. 292: 'Apud Parisios vero, dum portam civitatis illius magnis secum turbis euntibus introiret, leprosum miserabili facie horrentibus cunctis osculatus est atque benedixit. Statimque omni malo emundatus, postero die ad ecclesiam veniens nitenti cute gratias pro sanitate, quam receperat, agebat.'

²¹³ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XIV. 3, SC, 133, p. 284. See Leclercq, 'Lèpre'. Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, pp. 246–48, suggests that their isolation may have come somewhat later; Grmek, *Les Maladies à l'aube de la civilisation occidentale*, pp. 253–54, indicates that leprosy became more widespread after the collapse of the empire in the west and that the first evidence of isolation is from Gregory of Tours in the late sixth century.

restoring self-esteem and a sense of social identity to one who had been so disfigured that he could not recognize himself.

Is this a case of mistaken diagnosis — a psychosomatic skin condition? Or the literary condensation of an event that took place more slowly? Or is it a case of metaphorical language, meaning that the event was psychically but not physically true? However this may have been, the contemporary educated reader is likely to have understood the story also as a figure or a concretized image of the spiritual pattern of Jesus's compassionate love and sacrifice undoing the pollution of man's original sin. For the blessing is likely to have included the sign of the Cross, and that, as Rufinus explains it, is 'the eminent trophy of triumph; it is the trophy and sign of the defeated Enemy'.²¹⁴ Heinze quotes Spencer L. Rogers about such 'condensation symbols' saying that they are a 'condensed form of substitutive behaviour for direct expression, allowing ready release of emotional tension in conscious or unconscious form. [It is] rooted in the unconscious and transmit[s] an emotional quality to situations and behavior'.²¹⁵ Martin's transmitting this healing victory through the symbol of his blessing and his kiss thus resembles Black Elk's inventive re-enacting, and thereby imparting, of his healing dream through its symbols. In sharp contrast to what will be seen to be the practice of his good friend Paulinus of Nola, Sulpicius does not explicitly point to such symbolical meanings. As indicated earlier, one may surmise that he expected his educated readers to supply these themselves. This practice eventually became the conventional hagiographical two-levelled style of writing: a simple prose that could be understood by everyone, containing hints of deeper meanings that jogged educated readers' memories of biblical symbolism. Two centuries later Gregory the Great wrote his *Dialogues*, perhaps modelled upon those of Sulpicius, relating stories about recent and contemporary Italian saints in this deceptively simple style. He described it elsewhere, beautifully, as 'a river in which a lamb can walk and an elephant can swim'.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Tyrannius Rufinus, *Expositio symboli*, XII. 12, lines 13–14, CCSL, 20, p. 149: 'triumphi enim insigne est tropaeum; tropaeum autem devicti hostis indicium est'. Jesus's death on the Cross defeated Satan and his power over death (Bietenhard, 'Satan, Beelzebul, Devil, Exorcism', p. 470).

²¹⁵ Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*, p. 185, quoting Rogers, *The Shaman*, p. 59.

²¹⁶ Gregory the Great (Gregorius Magnus), *Moralia in Job, Epistula dedicatoria* 4, lines 177–78, CCSL, 143, p. 6: 'Divinus etenim sermo sicut mysteriis prudentes exercet, sic plerumque superficie simplices fovet. Habet in publico, unde parvulos nutriet, servat in secreto, unde mentes sublimium in ammiratione suspendat. Quasi quidam quippe est fluvius, ut ita diximus, planus et altus, in quo et agnus ambulet et elephas natet.'

‘The Sinister Illness of Paralysis’

Sulpicius’s descriptions of Martin’s cures often imply that physical and mental affliction was then understood as at least in part demonically caused — pointing to what we would now designate as a psychic factor. In the following story, the adjective *dirus* — sinister, frightful, hurtful, with a connotation of evil forces²¹⁷ — seems to point to the illness in question as indeed demonic in origin:

At Trier, a certain girl was held fast by the sinister illness of paralysis, in such a way that already for a long time her body did not serve her in any human way: already half-dead everywhere, she was hardly breathing.²¹⁸

As already indicated, paralysis and loss of the faculty of speech can be psychosomatic rather than organic. Martin ‘first turned to the weapons familiar to him in things of this sort and stretched himself out on the ground to pray’.²¹⁹ The description of prayer and prostration as a spiritual ‘weapon’, although perhaps also referring back to Martin’s soldierly past, points to the disease-causing agent that needs to be overcome as an ‘enemy’ — a common designation of the Devil in the Bible and in the Desert Fathers.²²⁰ An additional context is that of the Christian as a soldier in the heavenly army mentioned in the *Life*’s prologue. Although the girl is not said to be possessed in the proper sense, her body is evidently nevertheless immobilized by the power of an evil spirit that needs to be driven out for her to be healed. Sulpicius continues:

Thereafter, looking at the ill girl, he asked to be given oil. When he had blessed it, he poured the power of the holy liquid into the girl’s mouth, and her voice was at once restored. Then, gradually, upon each of his touchings, her limbs began to come alive, until the moment that, in the presence of the people, she arose with strengthened steps.²²¹

²¹⁷ *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, V, cols 1268–74. In the New Testament, illness is often but not always thought to be demonically caused; see Bietenhard, ‘Demon, Air, Cast Out’, pp. 452–53.

²¹⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XVI. 2, SC, 133, p. 286: ‘Treveris puella quaedam dira paralysis aegritudine tenebatur, ita ut iam per multum tempus nullo ad humanos usus corporis officio fungeretur: omni ex parte praemortua vix tenui spiritu palpitabat.’

²¹⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XVI. 7, SC, 133, p. 288: ‘primum, quae erant illius familiaria in istius modi rebus arma, solo prostratus oravit’.

²²⁰ Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 4: *Inimicus nominis Christiani diabolus*; and 8: *Hostis diabolus*, PL, 73, 129B and 132A respectively. On this designation in the Bible, see Bietenhard, ‘Satan, Beelzebul, Devil, Exorcism’, p. 469.

²²¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XVI. 7–8, SC, 133, p. 288: ‘Deinde, aegram intuens, dari sibi oleum postulat. Quod cum benedixisset, in os puellae vim sancti liquoris infundit,

Jesus is described as having healed the cripple on the bed in one instant and by verbal means, by forgiving him his sins and commanding him to walk (Matthew 9. 2–8), but Martin ostensibly applies the apostolic tradition of anointing and prayer which we saw in the letter of James (James 5. 14–16).

Rousselle notes here that paralysis was understood in this time as an illness of rigidified 'nerves' which needed to be anointed and massaged to be loosened.²²² Martin's 'touchings', however, appear to point to the anointing of her various limbs with the oil as a symbolic gesture as well — 'in the name of the Lord' — invoking the presence and action of Christ. In Trier, there is no indication that the subject of forgiveness — also mentioned in James's letter as part of the healing process — ever came up: the focus is upon Martin as an apostolic man of power. Jesus's disciples too, however, had already used oil in healing: the twelve 'cast out many demons and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them' (Mark 6. 13). It was also used for curing among the Egyptian ascetics.²²³ What we see here, then, is that Martin's supplicatory prayer, his blessing of the oil, and the manual application of this oil regarded as infused through him with heavenly power, dissolves demonically debilitating 'bonds' — nerves? — that immobilized her as though she were dead and made them 'come alive' again, evoking Jesus's similar resuscitation of the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9. 23–25).

At the symbolical level, then, the story is again a figure of a 'mystery': Christ — through his saint — restoring life to those who believe in him. Martin's symbolic strategy of pouring the oil into the girl's mouth and then anointing her body parallels Black Elk's sucking the cleansing North Wind through his patient's body, blowing over the cup of water with the crushed herb to his patient, and then letting him drink it. One might assume that it is essential that the patient and/or his caretakers in both cases understand, at least affectively, the meaning of the symbols used for the psychosomatic working of this preverbal kind of imagery to be effective. However, Sanford's story of the dead baby's revival as well as her cures of unconscious persons,²²⁴ to mention only those, remind of the possibly direct effects of the healer's imaging upon the patient, as well as of an energy possibly

statimque vox reddita est. Tum paulatim singula contactu eius coeperunt membra vivere, donec firmatis gressibus populo teste surrexit.'

²²² Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, pp. 96–97, 115.

²²³ For instance Jerome, *Vita sancti Hilarionis*, 44, PL, 23, col. 54A, and Palladius Helenopolitanus, *Historia lausiaca*, 13 and 52, PL, 73, cols 1104, 1160.

²²⁴ E.g. Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 87–88.

transmitted through touch. As for the latter, Dolores Krieger has today developed a completely empirical and pragmatic method, which she calls ‘the therapeutic touch’, that emphatically does not theorize about how it works — outside the biological pathways presently recognized by western medicine — and proclaims no miracles, but works with energies ‘channeled’ through the body, potentially accessible by all, to correct energy imbalances in oneself and others that cause pain and afflictions.²²⁵

‘Hanging Upside-down as It Were from a Cloud’

Extremely aberrant behaviour due to possession by a malignant spirit is described in the Gospel and in the early Christian period, but also in present-day traditional societies.²²⁶ In modern western society, similar behaviour tends to be regarded as loss of an ordered personality and alienation from the generally accepted intersubjective ‘reality’, or mental illness. In Sulpicius’s stories, the behaviour of the possessed in the church when Martin arrived to exorcize them can be said to exhibit embodied ‘figures of evil’. His description is a hyperbolized version of observed actual ‘possessed’ (or hysterical) behaviour in modern times.²²⁷ He tells us that they already began to howl (*rugientes*) and moan (*gemitus*) as soon as the saint left his monastery two miles away, as though they feared the arrival of a judge coming to condemn them — in this period, a judicial examination often included torture.²²⁸

The description that follows points to a combination of a Martin-like dream perception with a literary exaggeration for effect through metaphorical discourse, presumably to be understood as such by the educated. Gallus says: ‘I saw someone, at the approach of Martin, caught up in the air and hung up high with outstretched hands, so that his feet never touched the ground.’²²⁹ In the Gospels, the possessed

²²⁵ Krieger, *Therapeutic Touch*. A heart surgeon’s investigation of his patients’ near-death experiences — in states of brain death — concludes similarly that these perceptions operate in an as yet unexplored dimension: van Lommel, *Eindeeloos bewustzijn*.

²²⁶ See Crapanzano, ‘Spirit Possession: An Overview’.

²²⁷ Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, p. 55.

²²⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 6. 2, SC, 510, p. 310; cf. Fontaine in *Gallus*, SC, 510, p. 311, n. 5.

²²⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 6. 2, SC, 510, p. 310: ‘vidi quendam adpropiante Martino in aera raptum, manibus extensis in sublime suspendi, ut nequaquam solum pedibus adtingeret’. Cf. Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, pp. 225–35.

rave, rant, and run about, but never levitate.²³⁰ Martin's teacher Hilary, however, had mentioned levitation, in fact upside-down levitation, as a pattern of behaviour exhibited by the possessed being exorcized by the power of relics in Asia.²³¹ The image is likely to have been recognized as representing a spiritual reality projected upon a visible person; as such, it raises the question of perception in this period. Was the image so strong that, as psychologists have demonstrated to occur also today, it took over Gallus's perceptive pathways so as to block out the visible person's actual position?²³² And since the narrator presents the perception as possible, did at least Martin's admirers too tend to perceive their surroundings in this dreamlike manner? The scepticism of Briccius and his partisans shows that this kind of perception was not unusual. In any case, the image makes visible a state of mind, an affective pattern of having no firm grasp on intersubjective reality, being 'up in the air'; it is the opposite of being grounded in the only really stable reality, as Martin is in Christ — one of the core qualities which Sulpicius consistently highlights in his hero. As we can understand it, the image is not a sensory phenomenon but an affective one, representing the loss of a self in harmony with the conditions of the world and the universe.²³³ When meditatively internalized by the reader/listener, it could point him to similarities with his own condition and the need to do something about it.

More striking images follow, however. Whereas Jesus had exorcized by verbal command,²³⁴ Martin sent everyone away and prostrated himself in the middle of the church wrapped in his goat's hair cloak, sprinkled ashes over himself, and prayed for the demons to be driven out. The following description is presumably based on what he told the narrator afterwards:

Then indeed you see (*cerneres*) the wretches being urged to leave by various manners of exiting; some lifted up high by their feet and hanging upside-down as it were from a cloud, but their clothes not falling down over their faces lest their bared body part cause shame;

²³⁰ See Bietenhard, 'Demon, Air, Cast Out', pp. 449–54, and Vandenbroucke, 'Démon'. Modern anthropological observations are in Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons*.

²³¹ Hilary, *Contra Constantium*, VIII, SC, 334, p. 182, lines 6–7; quoted by Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, p. 137, and by Fontaine in *Gallus*, SC, 510, p. 311, n. 7: 'elevari sine laqueis corpora, et suspensis pede feminis vestes non defluere in faciem'.

²³² Singer, *Imagery and Daydream Methods*, pp. 175–76.

²³³ Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons*, explains illness as a social construction and the elaborate musical theatre of the exorcistic rite as one of reintegration of self into society and the cosmos. See also Kapferer, 'Mind, Self, and Other in Demonic Illness'.

²³⁴ Bietenhard, 'Satan, Beelzebul, Devil, Exorcism', pp. 474–75.

and elsewhere one would see ones vexed without an interrogation and confessing their crimes as well as revealing their names without anyone asking them. One would declare himself to be Jupiter, another Mercury. Finally, you see (*cerneres*) all the servants of the Devil together with their leader himself being tortured, so that we could profess to be fulfilled already in Martin the word of Scripture: 'for the saints shall judge the angels'.²³⁵

One can understand Briccius's scepticism about a story like this. By his own admission, the narrator was not present to see this improbable physical inversion and what is presented as an invisible divine version of judicial torture to elicit confession,²³⁶ yet he gives the illusion of presence. Concerned to make his hero at least the equal if not the superior of eastern saints, Gallus — in fact, Sulpicius — could have embellished whatever Martin told him and borrowed the image of upside-down suspension from Hilary. I would suggest, however, that these dynamic patterns of hanging in the air, or even hanging upside down in the air, may be recognized by some of us as more or less familiar through similar dream experiences. Hence we could understand Sulpicius's whole description as that of a concatenation of dream images representing the loss of a centred self, with the resulting disorientation and illusion of being, for instance, a pagan god. It represents the equivalent, I suggest, of what a shaman can regard as the loss of one's soul. Some shamans ritually go looking for it, drive away those who have stolen it, and restore it to its owner — as Martin does in his own way here.

Sulpicius's descriptions, I suggest, reveal Martin's as well as his own *tendency to interweave images of powerful symbols representing invisible experience with those of sensory perception*, appearing to exhibit something similar to the overlapping of the conscious and unconscious or dream spheres mentioned by Jung and Jacobi.²³⁷ Although ridiculed by Briccius and his friends, Martin and his admirers consciously perceived some of these images as visions. A hundred and fifty years later Gregory of Tours, who cherished Martin as his prime patron saint, manifests this same

²³⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 6. 4–5, SC, 510, p. 312: 'Tum vero cernerēs miseros diversō exitu perurguērī; hos, sublatis in sublime pedibus, quāsi de nube pendere, nec tamen vestēs defluere in faciēm, ne faceret verēcundiam nudata pars corporum; at in parte alia viderēs sine interrogatiōne vexatos et sua crimina confitentes. Nomina etiā nullo interrogante prodebant: ille se Iovem, iste Mercurium fatebatur. Postremo cunctos diaboli ministros cum ipso cernerēs auctore cruciari, ut iam in Martino illud fateamur inpletum quod scriptum est: "quoniam sancti de angelis iudicabunt". Cf. I Corinthians 6. 2–3; the quotation is not exact.

²³⁶ For a description of a very different strategy of exorcism in Kenya, see Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, pp. 125–32.

²³⁷ Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, pp. 62–63.

tendency, and even choice, to let important symbols shape his perception.²³⁸ We now know, of course, that whether we are aware of it or not, the visual models, expectations, and emotional needs of our imagination intersect with all of our perception.²³⁹ I would suggest that while we moderns are usually conditioned by our 'scientific' world view to attempt to recognize and filter out images of improbable turns of events, Sulpicius and his friends, with their convictions about the powerful reality of a spiritual world that could also act against them, had on the contrary a strong emotional need to see their hopes of divine support manifested in and confirmed by visible phenomena. After forty years as bishop, Brictius, whether now personally convinced of Martin's holiness or only submitting to pressure, finally gave in to the wish of the citizens of Tours to build a chapel over the tomb of the saint he had so long looked down upon;²⁴⁰ as will be seen, a later bishop would expand this veneration.

'Ridiculous Deliriums'? Uplifting Perceptions

Having considered some of the 'figures of evil' and their transformations, we will now look for the contours of beneficent patterns in Sulpicius's descriptions of uplifting visions and apparitions of the spiritual world by Martin himself and by others around him.

'Agnes, Thecla, and Mary Were with Me'

The monk Anthony is reported as having seen only demons, but Martin is said to have regularly perceived angels; their appearances are not described.²⁴¹ In the *Dialogues*, Sulpicius gives information on Martin's conversations with martyrs now living in heaven. Once while he and his friend Gallus were silently praying for some hours in front of Martin's cell, without his knowledge, they heard

²³⁸ See on this de Nie, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower*, pp. 207–10 and passim.

²³⁹ Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, pp. 90–91.

²⁴⁰ On the development of the cult of saint Martin, see Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, pp. 13–28; on Brictius, pp. 16–17.

²⁴¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XIV. 3–7 and XIX. 4, SC, 133, pp. 284, 294; and Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 13. 8, III. 13. 3–4, and III. 4. 1–5, SC, 510, pp. 280, 340–42, 300–04, respectively.

the murmur of people speaking, and at once we were overcome with a certain awed shivering and speechlessness, for we could not help recognizing that it was something divine. After almost two hours Martin came out towards us. And then Sulpicius — for no one was on more familiar terms with him — began to beg him to tell us, seeking piously to know what that awed shivering had been which we both said we had sensed, and with whom he had spoken in his cell — for the sound of those talking had been soft and we could hardly understand [the content], hearing it from outside. When he had hesitated a very long time [...] he said:

‘I shall tell you, but I beg you not to tell it further: Agnes, Thecla, and Mary were with me.’

He described to us the faces and clothes of each. And he confessed that they did not visit him only on that day but frequently. In addition, he said that he often saw the apostles Peter and Paul. Also, he castigated by name whichever demons came to him: above all, he said he was harassed by Mercury, and that Jupiter was brutish and stupid. These visions appeared incredible, even to many of those living in the monastery.²⁴²

Although presumably pious, these fourth-century monks, like Briccius, were evidently not inclined to believe in contemporary revelations. Were the demons which Martin perceived as pagan gods perhaps the saint’s own disguised temptations and negative qualities?²⁴³ As his confrontation with the Devil as an imperial Christ shows, he was well able to handle and dismiss them by staying close to his model and support: the humble Christ.²⁴⁴ Thecla (today recognized as a pious fiction) and Agnes were then venerated as martyrs, and Peter and Paul are of course

²⁴² Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 13. 2–7, SC, 510, pp. 276–78: ‘Interim conloquentium murmur audimus et mox horrore quodam circumfundimur ac stupore, nec ignorare potuimus nescio quid fuisse divinum. Post duas fere horas, ad nos Martinus egreditur. Ac tum eum iste Sulpicius, sicut apud eum nemo familiaris loquebatur, coepit orare ut pie quaerentibus indicaret quid illud divini fuisset horroris, quod fatebamur nos ambo sensisse, vel cum quibus fuisset in cellula conlocutus: tenuem enim nos scilicet et vix intellectum sermocinantium sonum pro foribus audisse. Tum ille, diu multumque cunctatus [...] “Dicam, inquit, vobis, sed vos nulli quaeso dicatis: Agnes, Thecla et Maria mecum fuerant.” Referebat autem nobis vultum atque habitum singularum. Nec vero illo tantum die, sed frequenter se ab eis confessus est visitari: Petrum etiam et Paulum Apostolos videri a se saepius non negavit. Iam vero daemones, prout ad eum quisque venisset, suis nominibus increpabat. Mercurium maxime patiebatur infestum, Iovem brutum atque hebetem esse dicebat. Haec plerisque etiam in eodem monasterio constitutis incredibilia videbantur.’

²⁴³ On the psychology of apparitions, see Dierkens, ‘Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines’, pp. 24–27; a classification of apparitions: pp. 31–36. Cf. Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, pp. 229–30.

²⁴⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXIV. 4–8, SC, 133, pp. 306–08. Since it is not part of his healing strategies, it will not be discussed.

the prime apostles of Rome and the west.²⁴⁵ There appears to be more distance to them than to the female saints, who are mentioned before them and whose physical appearances are described. Sulpicius cautiously leaves the former's appearance to the imagination of his readers. As already indicated, two hundred years later, the times had changed: Venantius Fortunatus's versification of the Martin stories would decorate and dwell upon these, and other, glorified heavenly appearances. One suspects that the humble Martin, if he had had further visions of his spirit guide Christ, might have preferred to keep silent about them. Conversing with the apostles and saints, however, would have mediated, and have been a humanization of, Christ's divine love. These visions, in combination with Martin's impulsive acts of love in Amiens and Paris, his non-resistance to physical and verbal abuse, and what appear to be his affectionate communications with female martyrs, may point to a tender sensibility that may not have been appreciated by the contemporary typically 'masculine' Roman male.²⁴⁶

'A Sphere of Fire' and 'Resplendent Jewels'

The *Dialogues* also report visions by others. Two of these are luminous phenomena seen on different occasions around Martin while he spoke the sacred words of consecration at the altar. The first followed a second signal act of compassion: his having just, secretly, given away his tunic to a waiting needy beggar and put on the rough one, intended for the beggar, which the archdeacon had belatedly brought. Sulpicius ends this story saying that such deeds, however, will never remain concealed and will become known to all²⁴⁷ — a cue, we know by now, to expect its revelation in the following story. Thus while Martin was wearing this prickly tunic on his skin, under his liturgical vestment,

on that very day — wonderful to say — when he was blessing the altar according to the ritual, we saw a sphere of fire shining out from his head in such a manner that a flame extending upwards brought forth as it were a long strand of hair.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Cf. 'Agnese, sante, martire di Roma'; 'Maria santissima'; 'Paolo apostolo, santo, martire'; 'Pietro, apostolo, santo'; and 'Tecla, sante, martire'.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Rousselle, *Porneia*.

²⁴⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 1. 9, SC, 510, p. 220.

²⁴⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 2. 1, SC, 510, p. 222: 'Quo quidem die — mira dicturus sum —, cum iam altarium, sicut est sollemnne, benediceret, globum ignis de capite illius vidimus emicare, ita ut in sublime contendens longum admodum crinem flamma produceret.' Cf. Standcliffe, *Sz. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 190–93.

As the educated will have remembered, in the Old Testament, fiery luminosity above or in the Tabernacle is regarded as a divine epiphany;²⁴⁹ and a similar perception had occurred among contemporary Egyptian ascetics.²⁵⁰ The flames of the Holy Spirit above the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2. 3–4) are likely to have been better known. Twenty-five-odd years later, John Cassian would describe what he called the occasional ‘oratio ignita’ (fiery prayer) of monks.²⁵¹ The perception of a similar phenomenon, perhaps influenced by this story, would be reported around Bishop Ambrose’s head a decade later.²⁵² Of the many people who were in church with Martin, however, only one virgin, one priest, and three monks (presumably including the speaker, Gallus) saw the fiery sphere. Why only they? As already indicated, modern clinical research shows that there are a number of factors that can influence the quality of one’s perception of the environment; malnutrition, sleep-deprivation, sensory deprivation, and a state of meditation, as well as a predilection for seeing spiritual/imaginative phenomena, are all likely to have played a role in the lives of these professed ascetics. In this sacred space, moreover, sense impressions and conscious thought are likely to have been more or less intentionally diminished in favour of attention to more subtle phenomena. The perceivers’ familiarity with (some of) the preceding perceptions, finally, would also have predisposed them to see the energies they sensed as images. Black Elk relates that, immediately after his Great Vision, a medicine man who was an older member of his tribe had seen his whole body suffused with ‘a power like a light’.²⁵³

The other vision, as far as I could find wholly unprecedented, was seen by someone whose imagination would have been conditioned to see just that: Arborius, a former prefect of the city of Rome and a figure who would have been intimately acquainted with the contemporary jewel-studded mode of male attire at the imperial court.²⁵⁴ Sulpicius needs only one sentence:

²⁴⁹ For instance, Exodus 40. 32–33.

²⁵⁰ MacDermot, *Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East*, p. 451.

²⁵¹ John Cassian, *Collat.*, IX. 26, CSEL, 13, p. 273, line 12.

²⁵² Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, XLII. 1, lines 3–7, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 108. Similar phenomena had been noted by the pagan philosopher-theurgist Iamblichus in his *Egyptian Mysteries*, III. 6, lines 10–15 (Jamblique, *Les Mystères d’Égypte*, ed. and trans. by des Places, p. 105); cited by Dierkens, ‘Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines’, p. 36. See also Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 60.

²⁵³ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, p. 49.

²⁵⁴ I have treated this passage and its later version in Fortunatus extensively in my ‘Poet as Visionary’, pp. 49–83.

The ex-prefect Arborius testified that he had seen Martin's hand offering the sacrifice clothed somehow with the most splendid jewels, sparkling with brilliant light, and that he had heard the sound of their colliding with each other at the movement of the saint's right hand.²⁵⁵

The ex-prefect's image of heaven, then, was now not only a jewelled city, as described in Revelation (21. 18–21), but evidently also its inhabitants as a court society in the contemporary jewelled style, visible also in Sulpicius's description of the Devil's appearance to Martin as an imperial Christ.²⁵⁶ The story is either the first surviving trace of this later so widespread image or in fact the origin of the latter. It appears to point to the kind of relations now to be maintained with the saint: as that with a patron at court.²⁵⁷

But that is not all that there is to it. Again, Sulpicius gives the clue to its understanding at the end of the immediately preceding story. After having related how Martin's disciples, at his advice, caught a large salmon for the Paschal meal when no one was able to catch fish anywhere, Sulpicius clearly points to the Gospel parallel of the disciples' miraculous catch (Luke 5. 1–11) when he adds:

Truly, he was Christ's disciple, imitating the Saviour's deeds of power which he gave as an example to his saints, showing that Christ was working in him — Christ who, glorifying his saint in every way, conferred upon one man the gift of various graces.²⁵⁸

These 'graces' must point ahead to the jewels. For there are passages in the Bible that speak of God's beauty or holy beauty being made visible through jewels. The Prince of Tyre, for instance, is said to be the 'signaculum similitudinis' (signet of [divine] likeness), filled with wisdom and perfect with beauty, and to have walked in the midst of flaming stones (Ezekiel 28. 12 and 28. 14). The Old Testament also enjoins its readers to worship the Lord 'in decore sancto' (in holy beauty) (1 Chronicles 16. 29). Thus the holy beauty of the vestments of the priests included four rows of three precious stones, representing Israel's twelve tribes (Exodus 27. 15–28). Jerome had equated these with the jewels in the Prince of Tyre's

²⁵⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 10. 6, SC, 510, p. 328: 'Testatur Arborius ex praefecto vidisse se Martini manum sacrificium offerentis, vestitam quodammodo nobilissimis gemmis, luce micare purpurea, et ad motum dexteræ conlisarum inter se fragorem audisse gemmarum.'

²⁵⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXIV. 4, SC, 133, p. 308.

²⁵⁷ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 93.

²⁵⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 10. 5, SC, 510, p. 326: 'Vere Christi iste discipulus, gestarum a Salvatore virtutum quas in exemplum sanctis suis edidit aemulator, Christum in se monstrabat operantem. Qui, sanctum suum usquequaque glorificans, diversarum munera gratiarum in unum hominem conferebat.'

diadem and with the twelve jewels in the fundamentals of the heavenly Jerusalem, indicating the order and diversity of virtues.²⁵⁹ One of Augustine's sermons speaks of the spiritual virtues as 'interior treasures, jewels, not of your safe-box, but of your conscience'.²⁶⁰ And the phrase 'diversa[e] gratia[e]' (various graces) in the sense of spiritual capacities related to the measure of merit appears about ten years later in Augustine's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.²⁶¹

Other fifth-century writers make a similar equation. Eucherius of Lyon states that 'precious stones [are] the apostles and saints as well as their works of power'.²⁶² It is Sulpicius's contemporary, the poet Prudentius, however, who most clearly speaks of 'virtutum gemma[e]' (gems of virtues).²⁶³ In the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, he writes, the twelve jewels 'sparkle conspicuously, and the light from on high pours forth living souls of colours from the clear deep'.²⁶⁴ This sentence shows that the antique conception of jewels as manifestations of living spiritual beings that 'breathed' had been carried over into Christian thinking.²⁶⁵ Now, however, they are thought to transmit what is almost certainly the 'unapproachable light' in which the Lord dwells, according to I Timothy 6. 16. If Sulpicius's educated friends indeed had something like these mental associations, Arborius's heavenly image of Martin becomes a very rich, deep, and joyful experience. Perhaps Martin's virtues that became 'powers' to effect transformations are, like what Sanford described as the 'healing light', indeed manifestations of a channelled cosmic creative energy.

'Billowing Abundance'

Sulpicius describes two perceptions which were interpreted as manifesting Martin's invisible blessing for which I also could find no precedent. One of these is that of

²⁵⁹ Jerome, *Epist.* 64. 16, lines 16–17, CSEL, 54, p. 603.

²⁶⁰ Augustine, *Sermones*, XXI. 8, line 229, CCSL, 41, p. 283: 'thesauri interiores, gemmae, non arcae tuae, sed conscientiae tuae'.

²⁶¹ Augustine, *Tract.*, VI. 8, line 7, CCSL, 36, p. 57.

²⁶² Eucherius of Lyon (Eucherius Lugdunensis), *Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae*, CMXXIV, CCSL, 66, p. 57: 'lapides pretiosi apostoli aut sancti sive ipsa opera virtutum'.

²⁶³ Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, 911, CCSL, 126, p. 181.

²⁶⁴ Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, 852–53, CCSL, 126, p. 179: 'distincta micant, animasque colorum viventes liquido lux evomit alta profundo'.

²⁶⁵ Hermann, 'Edelsteine', col. 506.

oil for curing — as we have seen, a traditional practice — which is seen to increase in volume through the saint's blessing.²⁶⁶ Although its perception alone does not confer any visible benefit, it must have been the visualization or projection in material form of an experience that spoke to the heart. For, variously configured according to circumstances, the miracle soon began to be replicated in other hagiographical writings, to continue all through the Middle Ages.²⁶⁷

Immediately after the story in which Martin cures the mute girl by pouring some oil he has blessed into her mouth, the narrator continues, almost certainly to show the invisible dimension of the previous story, but disingenuously presents the event as of little importance:

It is a small matter about which I recently heard from the priest Arpagius, but I don't think it should be omitted. Count Avitianus's wife had sent oil, needed for curing various illnesses, to Martin so that he would bless it, as was his custom. The glass flask was of a round belly-like form extending into a neck, but the long neck was left empty, for it is customary in filling vessels that the topmost part is left free for the plug. The priest testified that he saw the oil increase in volume under Martin's blessing until it ran down [the neck of the vessel], overflowing in heavenly abundance. And that, while it was being carried to the lady, the oil seethed with power, continuously flowing out in waves between the hands of the servant carrying it, to such an extent that it drenched his whole garment with an abundance of poured-out liquid; furthermore, that the lady [nevertheless] received the flask full up to the rim so that, as the priest today still testifies, there was no room in the glass to put in a plug, as is usually done when one wishes to store something carefully.²⁶⁸

Here, the anointing advised in the letter of James (5. 14–15) appears to have been modified into a take-out, self-help version. Ostensibly, the oil's increasing is not regarded as a great miracle: the narrator says that it is 'a small matter', perhaps

²⁶⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 3. 1–4, SC, 510, pp. 296–98. Cf. Cabrol, 'Huile' V; and 'Oil, Holy'.

²⁶⁷ Loomis, *White Magic*, p. 86, n. 201, lists a number of these.

²⁶⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 3. 1–4, SC, 510, pp. 296–98: 'Paruum illud est, quod nuper Arpagio presbytero referente cognovi, sed non praetermittendum videtur. Avitiani comitis uxorem misisse Martino oleum, quod ad diversas morborum causas necessarium, sicut est consuetudo, benediceret: ampullam vitream istiusmodi fuisse, ut rotunda in ventrem cresceret ore producta, sed oris extantis concavum non repletum, quia ita moris sit vascula complere, ut pars summa umbonibus obstruendis libera relinqueretur. testabatur presbyter vidisse se oleum sub Martini benedictione crevisse, quoad exundante copia superne diffunderet: eademque, dum ad matrem familias vasculum referretur, ferbuisse virtute: nam inter manus pueri portantis ita semper exundasse oleum, ut omne illius vestimentum copia superfusi liquoris operiret: matronam ita usque ad summum labrum plenum vasculum recepisse, ut presbyter hodieque fateatur, obdendi pessuli, quo claudi diligentius servanda consuerunt, in vitro illo spatium non fuisse.'

because it has no practical consequences at that moment. On the other hand, the overflowing oil does have sign-value: it is an analogue of the life-enhancing power of Martin's blessing. As long as our modern physical and psychological sciences continue to discover new interactive energy patterns, such as psychokinesis, in what is again beginning to look like a mind-body-world continuum, we have no good reason to regard such a perception as necessarily a phantasy.²⁶⁹

An act of perceiving, however, is less simple than it perhaps seems. As already indicated, modern psychological research shows that the information coming to us through the senses 'is not directly transformed into a conscious report. What is consciously perceived is *imagery* which is created by the organism itself. [...] The world we perceive is a dream we learn to have from a script we have not written' (emphasis added).²⁷⁰ In other words, the observation of sensory data tends to be influenced by images already present in the memory: we identify — and unconsciously, by privileging certain stimuli over others, even shape — incoming visual data according to what we already know or believe. However, if we do not have a 'visual concept' with which to recognize the incoming information, we cannot process it and will tend to block it out. In addition, imagination has been shown to be likely to interfere with perception: without being aware of it, we tend to overlay our sensory intake with our own pattern of selected memory images²⁷¹ — our 'dream' of reality. What all this means is that the priest Arpagius — already conditioned by his physical presence in a sacred space to notice a divine dynamic — is likely to have had at least some prior notions that enabled him to conceive of such an event as a real possibility in order to recognize and thus see the increasing oil as such.

He would have known, of course, about the only roughly similar events in the Bible: those of the prophets Elijah and Elisha increasing widows' oil supply for food

²⁶⁹ There is some evidence for this in medieval miracle stories; see Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, pp. 313–24. Recent studies, notably those of Professor Karl H. Pribram, confirm that the human brain receives and sends out energy waves that connect with as well as influence analogous phenomena in other minds and places. It looks as though modern science is finally beginning to vindicate some of the fundamentals of what the until recently much maligned and ridiculed miracle stories have been telling us all along. (For specialists only: *Rethinking Neural Networks*, ed. by Pribram.) A good synthesis of modern science for the general reader is Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. See also *Emerging Mind*, ed. by Shanor, and Watson, *Nature of Things*.

²⁷⁰ Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness*, I, 13.

²⁷¹ See especially Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, pp. 90–91; Singer, *Imagery and Daydream Methods*, pp. 175–76; and Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, passim. Cf. Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', p. 13.

and lighting (I Kings 17. 11–16; II Kings 4. 2–7). The surviving fourth-century monastic literature — as we saw, one of Sulpicius's models for his characterization of the saint²⁷² — contains only a few, separate instances of holy men blessing oil for healing and of increasing oil for food, the latter with specific reference to Elijah.²⁷³ As a historian, Sulpicius will also have come across another somewhat similar event: Eusebius's account in his *Church History* of Bishop Narcissus of Jerusalem turning water into oil for lamps when a shortage threatened.²⁷⁴ In none of these, however, is there any mention of oil that, after having been blessed for healing purposes, is actually seen to seethe with power and flow in billowing waves over the top of its container.

As we saw, Ricoeur pointed out that the poetic process 'finds/invents' images that represent its intuitions, and Bachelard that an image makes visible a psychic pattern of movement or 'dynamism' of a particular pattern of feeling.²⁷⁵ Alongside memory images of similar events in the past, the lady and the priest (and the author) would have had in the back of their minds formally analogous biblical metaphors and symbols that visually represented their 'dream' of the not directly accessible religious reality. As Sulpicius describes it and the priest may have experienced it, the dynamic contours of the upsurging, overflowing liquid resembled those of a spring or fountain. In the late antique religious context, they are likely to have been reminded, consciously or not, of passages such as Jeremiah's report of the self-image of God as the 'fountain of living waters' (Jeremiah 2. 13), and in Psalm 35. 10 (36. 9) as the 'fountain of life'. As is well known, the early Christians tended to understand many Old Testament prophecies and metaphors as pointing to the life of the spirit and to Christ. Thus the Evangelist John records Christ as saying that the water he would give would be 'a well-spring rising up to eternal life' (John 4. 14). This is a 'dream' image, as it were, of an interior process-event. Further, the diffuse Platonism that permeated Christian religiosity in the late antique period would have reinforced this affective experience of the inhabitation of Christ

²⁷² Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 48–54, 64–69, 83–84.

²⁷³ Palladius, *Historia lausiaca*, 13 and 52, PL, 73, cols 1104 and 1160.

²⁷⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea (Eusebius Caesariensis), *Historia ecclesiastica*, VI. 9. 1–3, SC, 41, pp. 97–98. In addition, he may have known about the miracle recorded in the Talmud of a one-day's supply of lamp oil burning for eight days in the Temple, which became the foundation of the Jewish feast of Hanukkah: *Babylonian Talmud*, Shabbat 21b, in *Texts and Traditions*, ed. by Schiffman, p. 712.

²⁷⁵ Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, p. 306; Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes*, pp. 10–13.

with its God-image of the overflowing, never depleted Source of Being.²⁷⁶ We see the symbol very clearly in a sermon delivered in the period just before Sulpicius wrote. In this, John Chrysostom asserts that the blessings exuding from relics

draw from the spring from which is continuously drawn and never made empty. For as flowing fountains gush forth, they are not contained in themselves but billow and flow over: thus also the grace of the Spirit, that inheres in the bones and inhabits the saints.²⁷⁷

Similarly, a western author of the same period, Quodvultdeus, writes of Christ as 'fons gratiae' (fount of grace) and 'fons vitae' (fount of life).²⁷⁸ In contemporary Christian art, this dynamism appears to be suggested by a large goblet with handles filled with water or the suggestion of wine by a stylized vine, pointing to Christ as the true vine (John 15. 1), with two doves (symbols of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 3. 16) or peacocks (symbols of immortality²⁷⁹) about to drink from it.²⁸⁰ The only example I have found so far in which a spurting fountain is visually suggested is that with two doves, possibly pointing to the inspired apostles Peter and Paul represented just above them in the mid-fifth-century mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna.²⁸¹ The golden bowl with water that never ran dry which the martyr Perpetua saw in her early third-century vision of Paradise must be the same symbol;²⁸² in the late sixth century, Gregory of Tours reports another vision of a spring in Paradise.²⁸³ But oil, too, was associated with the flowing of the Holy Spirit: in the third century, the Church Father Origen had spoken of an immaterial 'oleum

²⁷⁶ Plotinus, *Enneads*, III. 8. 8, trans. by MacKenna, pp. 246–47.

²⁷⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homilia dicta postquam reliquiae martyrum*, II. 1, PG, 63, cols 469[D]–470[A] (Latin translation): 'Ex hoc fonte haurirent, ex quo semper hauritur et numquam evacuatur. Sicut enim fontium fluentia scaturiunt nec intra proprios sinus continentur, sed exundant et supereffluunt: ita et Spiritus gratia, quae in ossibus insidet ac cum sanctis inhabitat.'

²⁷⁸ Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo*, II. 4. 14, line 34 and I. 12. 3, line 9, CCSL, 60, pp. 303–63 (p. 339 and p. 332, respectively).

²⁷⁹ Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, p. 238.

²⁸⁰ As in Brenk, *Spätantike und frühes Christentum*, plates 135 (wall of a mausoleum, Bithynia, mid-fourth century (?)), and 367a and b (relief in chapel of St Quinin, Vaison-la-Romaine, fifth century (?); sarcophagus, Toulouse, second half sixth century).

²⁸¹ Zovatto, *Il mausoleo di Galla Placidia*, plates opposite pp. 72 and 108, and fig. 25.

²⁸² Perpetua and others, *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, VIII. 2–4, ed. and trans. by Musurillo, p. 116.

²⁸³ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, VI. 29, MGH, SSrM 1. 1, p. 297, lines 1–12. On this symbol in Gregory's writings, see de Nie, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower*, pp. 77–88.

laetitiae' (oil of joy; cf. Psalm 44. 8 (45. 7)) being the 'sancti spiritus unguentum' (ointment of the Holy Spirit) with which Christ had been anointed.²⁸⁴

Barring new evidence, then, it looks as though the priest at Tours either actually saw happening what he described or 'dreamingly' perceived as or in a material event a subtle spiritual pattern which he had, as it were, only mentally imaged or 'dreamt' of before. There is increasing evidence today, however, that material objects can indeed take in and store patterns of energy that can later be accessed.²⁸⁵ Thus the priest Arpagius, sensing the saint's beneficent power or energetic field invisibly extending into the oil, could also have spontaneously imaged its dynamic pattern and thought he was seeing it in the sensory object — for, as we saw, it has been established that mental imagery and visual perception share the same underlying mechanism.²⁸⁶ And did the oil actually flow over while being blessed — by Martin's or Arpagius's unintentional psychokinesis, for instance? It could also be one of Sulpicius's hyperboles and embellishments for effect. That it spilled over while being carried will surprise no one. I suspect that this story was in fact not at all 'a small matter' to Sulpicius, for it must have signally supported his confidence in the blessing he so ardently desired. In the very next story it becomes visible.

Also an unprecedented perception, the story now reports what happened to a flask of oil in Sulpicius's possession which had been similarly blessed by Martin. Sulpicius is presented as having seen this miracle himself — as Gallus's story indicates, however, *after* it had happened. It makes clear too that the immediately preceding miracle was not in fact 'a small matter' at all:

Miraculous too is that which I remember as having happened to this man: and he looked at me [Sulpicius: an authorial intrusion]. He had placed a glass vessel with oil which had been blessed by Martin in a window that was a little higher up. The household servant, not knowing that there was a flask beneath it, carelessly pulled at the linen cloth that had been placed over it. And the vessel fell down upon the floor tiled with marble. Although everyone was terrified by the fear that the blessing of God might perish, the flask was found to be as undamaged as if it had fallen upon the softest feathers. This event should not be attributed to chance as much as to the power of Martin, whose blessing cannot perish.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Origen (Origenes), *In canticum canticorum homiliae*, I. 3. 11, SC, 375, p. 214. Cf. Acts 10. 38.

²⁸⁵ As amply shown by Watson, *Nature of Things*.

²⁸⁶ Kosslyn, *Image and Brain*, p. 54.

²⁸⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 3. 5–6, SC, 510, pp. 298–300: 'Mirum et illud, quod huic — me autem intuebatur — memini contigisse. Vas uitreum cum oleo, quod Martinus benedixerat, in fenestra paululum editiore deposuit: puer familiaris incautior linteum superpositum, ampullam

This story together with the previous one constitute the second part of Sulpicius's personal confession of how important Martin's continued blessing is to him: here he is reassuring himself of its indestructibility by human or natural action. The fact that he even mentions 'chance', however, can only mean that he realizes that the event is not completely impossible; he is quite consciously *choosing* to understand it as a miracle. The flask, for instance, could have fallen — and is even likely to have fallen — while still enveloped by the linen cloth, and this would of course have substantially softened the impact. It is clear, however, that this event too — as far as I know, similarly without precedent — is experienced as highly symbolic. Alongside the imagistic message that Martin's blessing — that is, power delegated by Christ — can overcome natural forces like gravity, density, and impact, it may be a figure of humankind. For the vessel was an image of man's body: 'know that each one of you should possess his vessel in holiness and honour'.²⁸⁸ Martin, as we saw, was 'filled with God'; the possessed were filled with evil spirits. And the first man, Adam, had also fallen into a state of sin, in a sense through carelessness. The grace of Christ through Martin, however, could keep whole those who were restored to their original state through baptism, whatever happened. At the same time, in a secondary manner, the image of the unbroken flask may point back to the saint himself as 'a man full with God'.²⁸⁹

What happens in the reader when, induced by the text, he imaginatively re-enacts the metaphor to describe the event: the glass vessel colliding with a marble pavement that is said to act as it though it were the softest feathers? Or conversely, the fragile glass remaining unaffected by the hard impact as though it were made of wood or metal? Like the spontaneously overflowing oil, this phenomenon appears to exhibit a dynamic pattern that does not exist in the visible world and does not conform to material causality as common sense knows it. My conclusion is that both of these stories *manifest qualitatively different patterns of invisible affective-spiritual experience*. We saw that the philosopher Henri Corbin called the imagination's visualization of invisible patterns of new affective experience its 'epiphanic'

ibi esse ignorans, adtraxit. vas super constratum marmore pavementum decedit. cunctis metu territis benedictionem Dei perisse, ampulla perinde incolumis est reperta, ac si super plumas mollissimas decidisset. que res non potius ad casum quam ad Martini est referenda virtutem, cuius benedictio perire non potuit.

²⁸⁸ I Thessalonians 4. 4: 'ut sciat unusquisque vestrum suum vas possidere in sanctificatione et honore'. Cf. 'Vessel'.

²⁸⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 1, SC, 133, p. 256: 'vir Deo plenus'.

function.²⁹⁰ These perceptions may have been interactions between sensory-concrete phenomena, memory images of earlier similar events, and analogous expressive symbols, as well as, perhaps, the imagination's revealing in a new image an affective pattern that is interiorly sensed.²⁹¹

Like the flask holding the blessed oil — imaged in the preceding story as seething in power and overflowing in a heavenly abundance — enclosing in one's heart the blessing grace of Christ through Martin would then make one immune to falling apart in possession, disease, and death. And when the marble floor was perceived/felt to embrace the falling flask as a blanket of down all this might be affectively experienced as something like the protecting embrace of Martin himself that rescues and maintains one's personal identity in an environment bristling with shattering invader spirits. In other words, the event-stories about the oil are, in essence, materializing transfigurations of Sulpicius's ecstatic vision of the saint blessing him.

Sulpicius's New Dream

Sulpicius's presentation of his unconventional 'outsider' hero Martin as a present-day apostle and martyr, and his blessing and miracles as heavenly patterns possibly continuing to be seen to act in visible phenomena, constitute a new 'dream' or model of present reality that combined traditional and new elements in a way which not everyone was then ready to accept. He defended what he regarded as his hero's heaven-tending lifestyle and *virtutes* (deeds of power) by omitting mundane details and using his own blend of imaginative ones to intimate and heighten their miraculous dimensions. Making everything appear as miraculous as possible reflects his wish to glorify his beloved teacher, a wish that is almost certainly connected with his deeply felt need for Martin's continuing blessing, which could be counted on only if he were truly the equal of the apostles and martyrs.

The author's constant hopeful expectation of miracles and visions, however, also points to his habitual accessing of a certain non-common-sense or dreamlike state of mind alongside his everyday common-sense perception. As a pale reflection of Martin's visionary discernment, it becomes visible in his constant references to the invisible dimension of events in the interweaving of descriptions of sensory

²⁹⁰ Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice*, pp. 166–70; discussion by Durand, *L'Imagination symbolique*, pp. 12–14, 29–30.

²⁹¹ An earlier version of this part of the chapter appeared as de Nie, 'Configurations of Miracle'.

phenomena with images of spiritual ones. It is also likely to have been a carry-over of his and his friends' habitual meditative processing of biblical texts that filtered out conscious thought and sensory stimuli to penetrate the affective-spiritual 'mysteries' hidden in its images.²⁹² It looks as though this mode of apprehension was carried into daily life in the hope of seeing and experiencing the subtle energies²⁹³ they had read about and mentally imaged, for 'the world we see is a dream we learn to have'.²⁹⁴

The larger 'dream' which Martin wanted to realize is reflected in Sulpicius's descriptions of the saint's cures. Many of these seem to point implicitly to the events being regarded and experienced as miniature re-enactments — and reflections — of the Christian 'mystery' of Christ's victory over Satan and continuing healing and restoration of humankind. Individual healing, then, was carried out with condensed symbolic gestures that were sensed to *presence and activate* the larger living reality. In the emotional dimension, Martin overcame the disabling patterns by bringing Christ, the image of the infinitely loving and victorious God and Centre of reality, to the sufferers through traditional Church symbolic ritual: praying (asking for power), touching and anointing (transmitting this power), and the sign of the Cross (invoking the presence and action of Christ's victory). As we have seen, the cures and spiritual liberations which Sulpicius shows happening renew Christ's earthly miracles and can also be understood as contemporary manifestations or figures of the New Testament's central divine 'mystery' of Christ's salvation as the healing of spirit and body.

In Martin's miraculous cures, the implicit 'figures of evil', viewed as diabolic power invading the subject from without, are the patterns of disfigurement, immobilization, levitation, and inversion. They all point to what we would designate as a loss of the centred personality or 'soul loss'.²⁹⁵ Sulpicius also gives a new image of the heavenly Martin as clothed in brilliant jewels that would be expanded a century and a half later.²⁹⁶ Although Martin understood himself and was understood by his friends to continue the tradition of the prophets and apostles, his manner of healing can at the same time be understood by us as similar to the symbolic strategies by which shamans have been achieving similar 'miraculous' cures since prehistoric

²⁹² Cf. Hadot, 'Antike Methodik der geistigen Übungen im Frühchristentum'.

²⁹³ Cf. Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', p. 22.

²⁹⁴ Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness*, p. 13.

²⁹⁵ See Jung, 'Concerning Rebirth', p. 120.

²⁹⁶ See on this de Nie, 'Poet as Visionary'.

times, and which today have been intensively and extensively observed by scientifically minded sympathetic anthropologists. The images of the overflowing oil and of the unbreakable oil-filled glass flask are very suggestive as objects of meditation and represent new perceptions of beneficent patterns of energy, possibly stored in inanimate objects and at work in human beings, that can function as life-enhancing, empowering symbols of vitality. Through these experienced symbols, the readers would also become 'tuned into' the larger, formally analogous, transformational patterns of the 'mysteries' of the Christian faith — today regarded by some as culturally shaped perceptions of innate as well as incoming patterns of cosmic beneficent energies, at work in our 'electro-magnetic cloud'.²⁹⁷

Sulpicius wanted to transmit the truth of the 'dream' quality of his vision of reality through insisting upon the reader's *unquestioning* belief in Martin's miracles. The rational common-sense consciousness is to be put aside and a meditational receptiveness to the imagistic dynamics visible in the miracle stories to take over — the unconscious, imagistic awareness is thereby accessed and addressed. Reading or listening to the miracle stories in this state of mind would imprint model-images of symbolic Christian healing upon the 'dream' level of awareness that would come to mind and become activated when entering this awareness during praying in case of need. The most intimate healing image of Sulpicius's 'dream', however, is that of the saint himself as a shining figure in the dreamvision: smiling, reflecting the glorified Christ, and blessing him with words and touch. As will be seen in the following chapters, others in this period too discovered a new, luminous image of the saint to whom they were praying.

²⁹⁷ Patterns: Carl G. Jung, 'Psychology and Religion', par. 81, in Jung, *Collected Works*, XI, quoted by Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, p. 108. 'Electro-magnetic cloud': E. Green, M.D., quoted by Harpur, *Uncommon Touch*, p. 166.



Figure 3. 'The Hand of God', mosaic, Ravenna, San Vitale. Sixth century.
Copyright Genevra Kornbluth.

‘CONCEIVE DIVINE APPREHENSIONS’: PAULINUS OF NOLA’S ENVISIONING OF A DEAD SAINT’S MIRACLES

Now that the Gospel shines through the whole world, and God, soon to judge all lands, draws nearer and everywhere presents the banner of his arrival, Christ flashes forth his signs [i.e. miracles] through his friends. From among these friends, he wished to choose Felix to shine before him [in this region], so that he might dispel our darkness through this star, and might also drive out from the city the ancient demons, so that when such inhabitants had been expelled from men’s hearts, God might enter into their pure minds and live there.¹

This passage, written in the year 405 by Sulpicius’s Aquitanian friend Paulinus of Nola (353–431)² and part of an annual poem or *natalicium* celebrating the saint’s *dies natalis* (day of birth into heaven), sums up the poet’s view of the emerging cult of saints everywhere. It is Christ’s way to achieve the deeper conversion of those once worshipping the old gods, regarded as demons, as a preparation for his now more imminent final Judgement. In a letter written around 400, Paulinus expresses the same view and adds that ‘every day and

¹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XVIII. 225–33, CSEL, 30, p. 126: ‘Sic iam evangelio totum radiante per orbem | et propiante deo cunctis mox iudice terris | adventus vexilla sui praetendit ubique | perque suos Christus sua signa coruscat amicos. | ex quibus hac voluit sibi praelucere sub ora | Felicem, ut nostras isto decerperet umbras | sidere et antiquos ista quoque pelleret urbe | daemonas, ut pulsus hominum de corde colonis | talibus intraret puras deus incola mentes.’ His writings have been translated by Walsh in *The Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola* and *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola*. An earlier version of parts of this chapter appeared in sections of my “*Divinos concipe sensus*”.

² For Paulinus’s life and works, see Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*; dates of his life and career: pp. 273–87. On his world view, see Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster*. Older is Lienhard, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism*. Cf. Frend, ‘Paulinus of Nola and the Last Century of the Western Empire’.

everywhere miracles and signs are multiplying³ so that all men may be saved. As we also saw in Eutropius's letter, in Ambrose's and Maximus's sermons, and more prominently in Sulpicius's writings about Martin, the New Testament notion of Christ's preparing humankind with these for his imminent Judgement is used to fit the return of miracles into the pattern of expectation of the existing Christian world view. Along with Paulinus's extensive building programme around Felix's shrine near the city of Nola, his declamations of the celebratory poems in honour of Felix have been described as a sustained effort to Christianize the region.⁴ It is not surprising, then, that after establishing himself as the manager of the shrine, Paulinus eventually became Nola's bishop.

For the poet himself, as Peter Brown has eloquently shown, the saint's role as his miracle-performing 'invisible companion' or guardian spirit, friend, and patron came to be at the centre of his life and his self-perception.⁵ Precisely how this dependence came about in the process of the enormously wealthy aristocrat's gradual turn from secular to monastic life cannot now be clearly established. Childhood experiences of his parents' taking him to Felix's shrine, the example of his friend Sulpicius's devotion to Martin, his contacts with Pope Damasus and with Ambrose — all these appear to have played a role; perhaps also, as Peter Brown suggests, the ascetic's increased concern with sin and with the feebleness of unaided human effort intensified the anxiety about the now more imminent-seeming Judgement.⁶ From 395 on, when Paulinus had resolved to settle at Nola, his *Natalicia* show him feeling himself to be the saint's special protégé, discerning, needing, and now expecting his loving protection and power in every event, large or small.

The language of patronage and friendship with which he often addresses the saint in his poems derived from a traditional part of his aristocratic life.⁷ In this, the cultivation, and perhaps almost the cult, of poetry was a favoured mode of communication. Paulinus, however, was more than an occasional poet. His prose letters too show him continuously and almost exclusively constructing ideas through associations of images, there overwhelmingly from the Bible. His thirty-three extant poems, not surprisingly, betray more reminiscences of Rome's classical poets,

³ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 38. 7, CSEL, 29, p. 192, lines 25–26: 'in omni loco plura cotidie miracula solito signaque crebrescent'. Cf. I Timothy 2. 4.

⁴ Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 173–86.

⁵ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 50–68.

⁶ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 64–65.

⁷ See Fabre, *Saint Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne*.

especially Virgil.⁸ While almost half of the poems are addressed to Felix, the saint is mentioned very infrequently in his fifty-one letters. Almost all of Paulinus's surviving writings, however, date from the years prior to 408. It is assumed that the disturbed communications and destruction associated with the Germanic invasions in Gaul and Italy in these and the following years are responsible for the unfortunate loss of what must have been many more letters and poems.

By the time Paulinus began to describe Felix's miracles around the shrine, he had Sulpicius's brief prose descriptions of those of the living saint Martin at hand. There was, at that time, no literary model in Latin for describing a miracle by a *dead* saint. It is possible, however, that his visitors from the east brought him copies of the eastern Fathers' eloquent and imaged sermons about the miracles of the martyrs. In what follows we will see Paulinus, like the Greek Fathers and in sharp contrast to Sulpicius's restrained presentation of Martin's miracles, develop an intensely imagistic way to describe Felix's new miracles that combines echoes of classical poetry with the allegorical approach then gaining ground in biblical exegesis.

At the same time, however, in what he decides to recognize as a miracle and in how he presents it to his audience at Nola we see a process of trying to convince himself and others of his identity as the saint's special representative at the shrine.⁹ Whereas in the *Natalicia*, however, the saint is envisioned only through what are interpreted as his actions, in the exceptional letter forty-nine a detailed — as well as, one suspects, greatly enhanced — prose description is given of the dead saint's apparition to a simple sailor during what the latter experienced as his miraculous rescue from death at sea. In his writings, Paulinus not only wanted to recognize as many as possible of his beloved saint's miracles as manifestations of divine dynamics at work in visible phenomena. He also let his imagination weave these miracles into the hard facts of earthly affairs, and used what he believed to be their purport to influence his own and others' perceptions of concrete situations.

'A Truly Divine Poet': Poetic Imagination as Theophany

Paulinus was born into an immensely wealthy senatorial family in Aquitaine.¹⁰ As a young teenager, while staying on one of the family's estates in Campania, he was led by his family in what must be the Christianized version of a Roman custom, to

⁸ Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 198–251.

⁹ Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 186–97.

¹⁰ On Paulinus's early life, see Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 23–103.

deposit the shavings of his first beard at Felix's shrine.¹¹ An underlying cause of his turn to Felix may thus be his having been brought up in his family's special trust and veneration of the saint.¹² His settling at Nola, however, came only much later when, after tragedies in his personal life, he made a decision that became a cause célèbre among his contemporaries.¹³ Perhaps following the example of the then famous and controversial hermit Anthony, he took Christ's instruction to the rich young man literally, giving the proceeds of the sale of most of his Aquitanian and Spanish estates to the poor, rejecting secular life, and embracing one of seclusion, ascetism, and biblical meditation in self-exile in Nola.¹⁴ There, apparently ignoring the potential rights of the city's bishop, he began to build up Felix's shrine in the cemetery outside the city as a centre of monastic piety and popular pilgrimage with himself as the saint's representative. As we saw, it was a relatively novel thing to do in this period. The example of Ambrose, that other innovator — whom Paulinus is likely to have encountered when at Milan in the early 380s — may have been a model here.¹⁵

Paulinus's birthday poems for Saint Felix were also something new: an adaptation of a secular Roman genre.¹⁶ He recited them annually on 14 January to the pilgrims and country folk gathered at Nola for the celebration of the saint's birth into heaven. The content of the miracles is, on the whole, presented in ways that ordinary, illiterate folk could understand, for instance as a lesson that the saint could be trusted to help if asked, but also that he inflicts temporary mild punishments upon those who wrong him to persuade them to change their attitude. The complex allusions of the poems' elegant, decorated language, on the other hand, would have been fully understood only by Paulinus's highly educated friends and correspondents, who probably received copies.¹⁷

¹¹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 377–78, CSEL, 30, p. 170. Cf. Paulinus of Nola, *Poems*, trans. by Walsh, p. 388, n. 52.

¹² See Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 365–73, CSEL, 30, p. 170.

¹³ See Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 53–103, and Walsh, 'Paulinus of Nola and the Conflict of Ideologies in the Fourth Century', p. 567.

¹⁴ Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 34–38, regards this as a break with tradition in the contemporary Church. Fontaine, 'Valeurs antiques et valeurs chrétiennes', argues that there were important convergences between Paulinus's ascetic retreat and the Roman tradition of rural *otium*; cf. Lienhard, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism*, pp. 33–51, 128–41.

¹⁵ Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 47–50, 161–65.

¹⁶ On the *Natalicia*, see Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 161–86.

¹⁷ On Paulinus's poetic and literary style, see Junod-Ammerbauer, 'Poète chrétien selon Paulin de Nole'; Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien*, pp. 143–76; Evenepoel, 'La Phrase

'Conceive Divine Apprehensions'

Before examining the miracle stories themselves, we need to look a bit more closely at what Paulinus thought he was doing with his writing about miracles. This becomes evident in an elegant verse letter to his poet friend Jovius written around the year 400.¹⁸ Paulinus urges him to write not about ancient literary fictions such as the judgement of Paris, but about eternal realities:

Begin to devote your heart solely to divine matters so that your thoughts and sensibilities, raised from the earth, may be lifted up to God. Then, before your eyes, through an opened sky, a new light will be born; the Holy Spirit will enter with a silent movement through the opened passage and make your inmost heart quiver with a joyful breath. [...] Now take up subjects congruent to your age and chaste manners, and which the venerable appearance of your countenance demands: conceive divine apprehensions.¹⁹

The term *sensus* has a wide range of meanings in this period: it can be feeling, awareness or consciousness, (physical) sensation, sentiment or sensibility, thought, opinion, intelligence or comprehension, and meaning or significance.²⁰ The first occurrence of *sensus* in this passage appears to refer to a state of awareness and sensibility as well as to conscious thoughts. In the second occurrence, given that mental sensation, understanding, and meaning are all involved as being 'conceived', I have chosen to translate it with the wide-ranging term 'apprehensions'. The passage just quoted has been described as 'a quasi-mystical theory of inspiration' — significantly evident in some of the prologues to the *Natalicia* — and Paulinus's allusive poetry as 'a spiritual art'.²¹ In the prologue to an early poem, a poeticized history of Saint John the Baptist from Gospel materials, we find a similar use of the term *sensus*. Paulinus writes there that he hopes to imitate the psalmist-poet David and that therefore 'it

et le vers dans les *Carmina* de Paulin de Nole'; Kohlwes, *Christliche Dichtung und stilistische Form bei Paulinus von Nola*; and Green, *Poetry of Paulinus of Nola*.

¹⁸ On the poem's date, see Paulinus of Nola, *Poems*, trans. by Walsh, p. 391. I have made my own translations.

¹⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXII. 4–8, 17–19, CSEL, 30, pp. 186, 187, respectively: 'Incipe divinis tantum dare pectora rebus | subrectosque deo sensus adtollere terra. | mox oculis caelo nova lux orietur aperto | intrabitque sacer tacito per [a]perta meatu | spiritus et laeto quatiet tua viscera flatu [...]. et qualem castis iam congrua moribus aetas | atque tui specimen venerabile postulat oris, | suscipe materiam, divinos concipe sensus'.

²⁰ Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, p. 752. I have attempted to render the — possibly multivalent — meaning intended in each case.

²¹ Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien*, pp. 152, and 143–60, respectively.

is right for us too to have remembered God and, although our heart is buried under many sins, to receive a heavenly apprehension'.²² Being ready to 'receive' appears to point to a more passive attitude than the *imperative* 'conceive', which implies some active participation in the process of apprehending by the subject.

Elsewhere in Paulinus's writings, such an actively participative apprehension of invisible reality appears to take place through the affective, meditative beholding of a visible image.²³ The ancient theory of vision was that a ray emitted from the eye 'touched' its object, was thereby impressed by its pattern, and transmitted this impression to the soul.²⁴ Although not explicitly referred to, this view must have been taken for granted in what Paulinus writes about the effect of his gazing upon the face of his good friend Nicetas of Remesiana (fl. c. 400), a missionary bishop from what now is Serbia, who had come to visit him for the celebration of Saint Felix's *dies natalis*. We see, however, that Paulinus — at least in his literary representation of the event — has a process of fecundation in mind:

I shall look at him frequently with reverent eyes. From the face [and mouth, i.e. words?] of this wise man, perhaps, as once the unproductive cattle of the shepherd Jacob, I shall conceive fecund apprehensions in my barren heart. [...] This is how grace gives new life to barren souls in the name of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit as husband impregnates through the intercourse of the Word.²⁵

Just as the Church, he writes, through her (mental) gaze upon the symbols of Jacob's rods as representations of divine mysteries 'drinks in the moist seed of the Word whereby her face is signed with eternal light',²⁶ Paulinus himself beholds — that is, envisions with his mind's eye — these rods (i.e. mysteries) in Nicetas's heart. He writes: 'with fixed eyes, I drank in the colours I saw [there], and [Nicetas's]

²² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, VI. 25–26, CSEL, 30, p. 8: 'nos quoque fas meminisse dei et quamquam obruta multis | pectora criminibus caelestem admittere sensum'.

²³ I have discussed these passages more fully in de Nie, 'Paulinus of Nola and the Image Within the Image'.

²⁴ Miles, 'Vision', pp. 127–28.

²⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVII. 244–47, 258–59, CSEL, 30, p. 273: 'venerante frequente | lumine conspiciam; forsan sapientis ab ore | ut quondam effetae pecudes pastoris Iacob, | concipiam sterili fecundos pectore sensus. [...] sic animas steriles in nomine gratia trino | innovat, et verbi coitu vir spiritus inplet'. Cf. Genesis 30. 37–43. I have analysed this passage in de Nie, 'Paulinus of Nola and the Image Within the Image', pp. 21–24.

²⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVII. 262–63, CSEL, 30, p. 273: 'bibit uvida verbi | semina et aeterni signatur lumine vultus'.

dew-laden heart sprinkled me with divine drops'.²⁷ This is a crucial passage in Paulinus's view of the apprehension of invisible realities. The implicated concept of the spontaneous interior replication of an image (also when communicated through words) through its very beholding is conflated with the metaphor of impregnation by the Holy Spirit and the resulting conception. Envisioning and thereby internalizing the biblical image of a divine mystery, then, is simultaneously being impregnated with the 'seed' of the Holy Spirit, and this causes a 'fecundus sensus' to be generated in the 'barren heart' of the beholder. *Beholding/conceiving the image of a divine mystery, then, precipitates its apprehension as a living reality in the heart.* This is the essence of the process which Paulinus is attempting to set in motion through his meditations and his meditative writings.

This notion and the mention of the Church's face as 'signed' with light, however, point to the resonation of a crucial but usually neglected passage in the letters of the apostle Paul. After having referred to Moses's shining face when he had just seen God on the mountain, the apostle writes about the believers' beholding/understanding Christ prefigured in the Old Testament text: 'we too, perceiving/reflecting (*speculantes*) the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face, are transformed into that same image (*in eandem imaginem transformamur*), from light to light, as though by the Spirit of the Lord'.²⁸ 'Unveiled face' here means the seeing through the literal sense of the text to its deeper meaning, something which Paulinus too was constantly engaged in doing. *Speculantes*, however, implies reflecting an image (a *speculum* is a mirror) as well as perceiving one: a replication in the heart of the image seen. This passage anticipates modern psychology's (re)discovery of spontaneous, involuntary affective mimesis, described in the prologue of this book.

The notion of mentally 'conceiving', in a quasi-sexual sense, a living divine pattern, however, can be traced to the third-century Christian thinker Origen, the initiator of Christian allegorical interpretation and thus a proponent of images (rather than abstract concepts) as representations of higher truths. A number of his writings were translated into Latin in the period in which Paulinus was expanding his knowledge of the Bible. Possibly connected with the dissemination of these translations, the metaphor of a spiritual coitus was also a central theme in the fourth-century Christian ascetic literature with which Paulinus is likely to have

²⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVII. 271–72, CSEL, 30, p. 274: 'conspectumque bibi per lumina fixa colorem, | et me divinis sparsit mens roscida guttis'.

²⁸ II Corinthians 3. 18: 'nos vero omnes revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes in eandem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem tamquam a Domini Spiritu'.

been acquainted.²⁹ As one of the first writers in the west to practice allegorical interpretation, he may very well have arrived at his notion of ‘conceiving’ a *divinus sensus* through impregnation by the Holy Spirit through these sources.

In the case of Jovius as well as of Nicetas, the attitude of the receiving subject appears to be meditative, for meditation was then being taken up by the Christian ascetic élite.³⁰ In Paulinus’s literary advice to Jovius, as we saw, it is said to lift the mind up to contemplate the dimension of the divine in heaven, where the Holy Spirit would precipitate the ‘conceiving’ of ‘a divine apprehension’ (the term *divinus*, in the poetic metre, could also stand for ‘God’). Compared to conceiving merely ‘a fecund apprehension’, this is a pretty bold statement. *Paulinus here appears to equate poesis — the inspired ‘finding’/inventing of poetic images representing the dynamic patterns of invisible truths — with ‘conceiving’ images that reflect the patterns of the divine itself.*³¹ In other words, *poesis* can be theophany. The ‘divine matters’ to be meditated upon as stepping-stones towards this experience are later specified as the biblically revealed ‘miracula summi vera dei’ (true wonders of the highest God),³² and these, of course, consist of visible as well as invisible events. If Jovius were to write about these, Paulinus tells him, he would pronounce him to be ‘divinus vere poeta’ (a truly divine poet).³³ By this time, Paulinus had already written his poetical version of John the Baptist’s deeds: it must therefore have been his own aim as well.

‘A Holier Kind of Perception’?

Peter Dronke’s magisterial sketch of the fundamental change in the view of imagination in the first centuries AD puts Paulinus’s words about Christian poetic creation into perspective.³⁴ Although, as we saw, Plato had spoken of poetic inspiration

²⁹ On this, see de Nie, “Consciousness Fecund through God”, pp. 101–03.

³⁰ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, pp. 184–88, states that such meditative reading tends to shade into visionary experience.

³¹ Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l’occident chrétien*, p. 152, thinks that Paulinus’s poetic theory resembles that in the later *Dialogues* of Plato (427–347 BC) of an inspired and prophetic poetry that transcends reason. Cf. Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster*, pp. 124–26.

³² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXII. 29–30, CSEL, 30, p. 187.

³³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXII. 157, CSEL, 30, p. 193. Cf. van der Nat, *Divinus vere poeta*.

³⁴ Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, pp. 3–24. On the philosophical tradition in which Paulinus was embedded, see Chadwick, ‘Philosophical Tradition and the Self’. Paulinus’s philosophical-religious views as they emerge from his writings are analysed in Erdt, *Christentum und heidnisch-antike Bildung bei Paulin von Nola*.

in his later *Dialogues* as a gift of suprarational insights from above, the subsequent philosophical tradition persisted in denying its product real cognitive value, insisting that images belonged to the sphere of imitation of the visible — that is, of a shadow reality — only. Aristotle too had limited the poet's art to the visualization of the realm of the senses. In his treatise on the Orator, however, Cicero had first spoken of a suprasensory ideal, like Plato's Idea, not as a concept but as an image: the *species* of perfect beauty would have inspired Phidias's sculptures.³⁵ Such an image belongs to the sphere of cognition, not phantasy: it is grasped by 'cogitatio' (thought) and 'mens' (the mind), and is contemplated and intuited (*contemplabatur, intuens*) by the spirit (*animus*). Images in the mind, then, and not only abstract concepts, now came to be regarded as representations capable of communicating a real, higher truth.³⁶

A few hundred years later, Flavius Philostratus (fl. c. 200), in his life of the pagan Saint Apollonius, contrasting the handiwork (*demiourgesei*) of artistic imitation (*mimesis*) of the visible with the creative mental fashioning carried out by the imagination, writes that the latter 'creates what it does not see, since it will *conceive* (*hypothesetai*) it by reference to that which is (*ten anaphoran tou ontos*)' (emphasis added).³⁷ Precisely *in what manner* this bringing forth takes place is not indicated, but it is clearly meant to be something more creative than a mere copying. The *Life* was well known in Paulinus's time; its view of *creative* imagination may have influenced Paulinus's choice of words. As we saw, although poets must have continued to use this concept in practice, it disappeared from formal theology and philosophy until the late nineteenth century.

The third-century pagan philosopher Plotinus also privileged images as representations of higher truths, saying that 'the gods and the blessed do not contemplate propositions, but each of the forms [they contemplate] is a beautiful image [...] these images are not painted but real'.³⁸ He also said 'that the soul is filled with images

³⁵ Cicero, *Orator*, II. 8; cited in Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, p. 9.

³⁶ Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, p. 10.

³⁷ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, VI. 19. 2, ed. and trans. by Jones, pp. 154–55; trans. by Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, p. 10: 'Hypothesetai gar auto pros ten anaphoran tou ontos'.

³⁸ Plotinus, *Enneads*, V. 8. 5, as translated by Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, p. 12; the translation by MacKenna, p. 427, has 'all of that realm (the very Beings themselves), all is noble image, such images as we may conceive to lie within the soul of the wise — but there not as inscription but as authentic existence. The ancients had this in mind when they declared the Ideas (Forms) to be Beings, Essentials'.

that, if considered properly, are likenesses of archetypal realities in the divine realm' and that the correspondences between them are meaningful.³⁹ Thus even the spiritual archetypes of reality began to be thought of as images — a development that appears to point to a fundamental, albeit up to now relatively little-explored, change of orientation in this period.⁴⁰ As *reflections* of the divine realm, these images, Plotinus said, could be brought down into human souls and communicated through *poesis*;⁴¹ this idea may resonate in Paulinus's conception of the 'divine poet'. Finally, Paulinus's Syrian contemporary Bishop Synesius of Cyrene (c. 370–412) posited that imagination establishes a unique kind of bond between the human and the divine worlds and that it is 'perhaps a holier kind of perception'.⁴² In the development just sketched, then, we see that in the late fourth century the notion that higher or divine truth could be epiphanically apprehended in the form of a mentally envisioned image-pattern was, at least temporarily, gaining ground.

'God's Great Laws'

Notwithstanding his textual and otherworldly orientation, however, Paulinus also looked for signs of divine activity in contemporary visible events, and this is especially evident in his poems about Saint Felix's miracles. For him, if perhaps not for the philosophically inclined Jovius, they are among the wonders to be written about by the 'truly divine poet'. For, as he writes in his eleventh *Natalicium* (*Carmen* XVIII),

where [...] faith is sick among a faltering people, there it is certainly right that greater lights be kindled, and that through God's illumination dispersing the darkness of the world,

³⁹ Quoted by Miller, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, p. 105, n. 22.

⁴⁰ Alongside MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, and Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, and Miller, *Poetry of Thought in Late Antiquity*, Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, documents the transition from naturalism to symbolic ritualism in art, and Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism*, brilliantly pinpoints a parallel development in contemporary philosophy.

⁴¹ Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, p. 13; Miller, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, p. 105, n. 22, mentions the notion in Plotinus, *Enneads*, II. 9. 6 and III. 5. 1 (trans. by MacKenna, pp. 137–38, 191–92), that the soul is filled with images that, if considered properly, are likenesses of archetypal realities in the divine realm, and that the correspondences between them are meaningful.

⁴² Synesius of Cyrene (Synesius Cyrenensi), *Peri enyption*, V, ed. and trans. by Garzya, p. 564; cited in Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, p. 14.

dazed minds and dulled eyes are freed from their dark veil, anointed with the healing salve of Christ, and tremblingly reach out to those rays of divine truth.⁴³

The 'healing salve', Paulinus explains, is the apostolic writings that open one's eyes to God. As a manifestation and sign of an invisible heavenly dynamic working in the sensory world, a visible miracle, then, can jolt the mind out of its everyday conventional common-sense perception to recognize divine rays of truth in the surrounding world — a view which, as will be seen, Augustine would also propound. Paulinus appears to be saying that it would precipitate in the beholder a sensing/envisioning of this truth that resembles the meditative-poetical conceiving (receiving/creating) of divine apprehensions.⁴⁴ For, referring to what must be these, Paulinus writes to Jovius:

You, whose generous mind is aflame with the fire of the heavenly seed, ascend with your soul into the ethereal retreats and place your head on the Lord's bosom. Soon [...] the generous Christ [...] will bathe your mind in divine light, so that — the veil being dispelled — you may see the awesome God's great laws, through which the all-begetting Wisdom, Christ, whilst remaining within Himself, constantly renews all things.⁴⁵

The aim, then, is a philosophical/mystical envisioning of the 'laws' or dynamic patterns of the divine mysteries, *constantly being begotten* by the divine Wisdom or Christ — also through being 'conceived' in men's minds? — and *constantly renewing* all things.⁴⁶ As especially Paulinus's letters show, for him these 'laws' are those revealed through the patterns of biblical events and the prophetic and poetic images in the biblical prophecies — all recognizably recurring in present events. In the above-quoted passage, Christ — known, of course, to be 'the true Light that enlightens everyone coming into the world' (John 1. 9) — is said to illumine the

⁴³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XVIII. 28–34, CSEL, 30, p. 119: 'Ubi [...] aegra laborat | in populo titubante fides, ibi lumina prorsus | accendi maiora decet mundique tenebras | inlustrante deo perimi mentesque retusis | adtonitas oculis trepidasque intendere ad ipsos | divini veri radios, caligine taetra | solvere collyrioque medentis inungere Christi.'

⁴⁴ In 418–19, Augustine was to express a similar view in his *Tract.*, XVII. 1, lines 8–12, CCSL, 36, p. 170.

⁴⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXII. 79–86, CSEL, 30, p. 190: 'tu, cui mens generosa superni seminis igne | ardet, in aetherios animo conscende recessus | et gremio domini caput insere; mox [...] largus [...] Christus | divinoque tuam perfundet lumine mentem, | ut videas pulsa caligine magna tremendi | iura dei, quibus omniparens sapientia Christus | in sese ipse manens semper novat omnia rerum.'

⁴⁶ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, pp. 187–88, states that in Gregory the Great's late sixth-century *Dialogues* an image was considered simultaneously a figment of the imagination and a vision, in that it represented a true spiritual reality. Paulinus's view appears to be close to this.

poet's mind so that he can 'see' through the opaqueness of sensory events and literal textual meanings to perceive, in fact, 'conceive', glimpses or apprehensions of their informing divine image-patterns. As already indicated, Paulinus's allegorical expositions are pioneering works, probably inspired by Ambrose and Jerome.⁴⁷ The speculative manner in which his prose letters elucidate contemporary events and concerns by means of an often extensive and complicated web of associatively linked biblical images — a kind of poetic, rather than systematic, theology — is highly original.⁴⁸

Such divine 'laws', Paulinus asserts however, can never be seen with the physical eyes. For the visionary poet must

not be conquered by the empty things of the present world and spurn what he sees, so that he may deserve what he does not see, penetrating the heavenly secrets with his flaming consciousness. For it is the transient that is exposed to our gaze; the eternal is denied to it; and we now follow in hope what we see with our minds, rejecting the various forms and appearances of the material world.⁴⁹

Corporeal phenomena, then, were for him something to be reached through. Nevertheless, he believed that the sensory representations of the biblical symbols and events which, as is well known, he caused to be painted in his new churches at Nola, would 'nourish' the minds of the country folk looking at them — presumably by reminding them of the invisible truths of faith they had heard about and hoped to recognize in the present life.⁵⁰

The *Natalicia*

The birthday poems praising Felix and recounting his miracles try to communicate the invisible truths of the Christian life, as well as the proper attitude towards the saint, through stories that make these visible.⁵¹ Whether by choice or by circumstance, the beneficiaries of the miracles which Paulinus describes, other than himself,

⁴⁷ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, pp. 116–70, analyses how different writers did this.

⁴⁸ See Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster*.

⁴⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, X. 171–76, CSEL, 30, pp. 31–32: 'non vincant vacuis praesentia rebus, | quaeque videt spernat, quae non videt ut mereatur | secreta ignitus penetrans caelestia sensus. | namque caduca patent nostris, aeterna negantur | visibus, et nunc spe sequimur, quod mente videmus | spernentes varias, rerum spectacula, formas'.

⁵⁰ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVII. 514–15, CSEL, 30, p. 285. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* 1. 464: 'animum pictura pascit inani'. On the decoration of Paulinus's churches, see Junod-Ammerbauer, 'Les Constructions de Nole et l'esthétique de saint Paulin', and Goldschmidt, *Paulinus' Churches at Nola*.

⁵¹ Green, 'Paulinus of Nola and the Diction of Christian Latin Poetry', p. 83.

are all uneducated people. Roger Green regards the combination of classical form and comparatively simple narrative style in all of Paulinus's poetry as 'a novel recipe for didactic writing in which the ingredients were mixed not according to convention or personal taste but according to the various needs of their recipients'.⁵²

The numbers, dates, and content of the fourteen extant *Natalicia* are as follows:

1. *Carmen* XII (395): a prayer for a safe journey to Nola from Spain
2. *Carmen* XIII (396): joy and thanksgiving for a safe journey and arrival at Nola
3. *Carmen* XIII (397): description of the saint's annual birthday feast there
4. *Carmen* XV (398): first instalment of a *Life of Felix*
5. *Carmen* XVI (399): second instalment of a *Life of Felix*
6. *Carmen* XVIII (400): the journey of Felix's soul to heaven, and subsequent miracles of a pair of stolen oxen returned and its owner's eyes healed
7. *Carmen* XXIII (401): exorcisms and a cure of the wounded eyes of Theridius, Sulpicius's courier, then staying in Paulinus's monastery, heavily allegorized
8. *Carmen* XXVI (402): exorcisms, a prayer for protection against the barbarian armies rampaging in Italy, and Felix's putting out of a fire at the shrine
9. *Carmen* XXVII (403): a statement about the workings of all saints everywhere, a visit of Bishop Nicetas of Remesiana, and a description of Paulinus's new buildings around Felix's shrine with their pictures and inscriptions
10. *Carmen* XXVIII (404): more description of the buildings and another — now different — description of the stopping of the fire two years earlier
11. *Carmen* XVIII (405): the distribution of saints' relics in general; a thief who stole a cross from Felix's shrine is bound by invisible chains and returns it
12. *Carmen* XX (406): three animals vowed to Felix are guided by him to offer themselves willingly as sacrifices at his shrine to feed the poor; two delinquent masters are bound by invisible chains until they repent and make reparations
13. *Carmen* XXI (407): thanks for the (temporary) defeat of the barbarian armies, a description of some of the new recruits for Paulinus's monastic establishment and of aristocratic visitors, a summary of the poet's life with Felix, and the saint's influence in procuring the shrine's water supply
14. *Carmen* XXVIII (409?): fragments not containing a specific miracle.⁵³

It has been suggested that the first three of these show no trace of having been recited in front of an audience; the public recitation would have begun with the

⁵² Green, 'Paulinus of Nola and the Diction of Christian Latin Poetry', p. 85.

⁵³ Cf. Kamptner, 'Zur Einheit von Paulinus Nolanus, carmen 18', p. 192.

first installment of Felix's *Life*.⁵⁴ In addition, as already indicated, there is Paulinus's letter forty-nine (after 408) that contains a description of the uneducated sailor Valgius's rescue, allegorized for the recipient's benefit.⁵⁵

In these poems, exorcisms — described several times at some length — are said to be plentiful. As for miracles, although Paulinus says he is choosing from many miracles, the ones actually recounted in full are relatively few and circumstantial, that is, capable of other explanations. Three are in fact temporary punishments, and there are no substantial cures. Passing over Paulinus's descriptions of the mostly 'nature' miracles around Felix during his earthly life — literary refigurations by the poet of what must have been an oral tradition — and the decorative, didactic descriptions of a few contemporary miracles concerning the local country folk, I shall give an in-depth analysis of the only description that is elaborately symbolic and allegorized: that about the experience of Paulinus's courier Theridius. After a subsequent consideration of Paulinus's perception and understanding of Felix's miracles in his own life, I shall conclude with an analysis of his equally heavily allegorized prose presentation of the sailor Valgius's vision and rescue at sea.

'The Hand of God': A Layered Vision

Let us, speculatively, visualize Paulinus's oral delivery of the seventh *Natalicium* (*Carmen* XXIII).⁵⁶ On a wintry morning, the fourteenth of January, in the year 401,⁵⁷ a mixed crowd of country folk, clerics, monks, city-based aristocrats, and perhaps a few visiting foreigners is gathered in Saint Felix's church. Amidst many fragrant oil lamps and candles, white curtains and ivy garlands (mentioned as present in a previous poem⁵⁸), Paulinus, shabbily dressed in a rough monk's cloak, walks to the lectern and begins to recite these words:

Spring releases the birds' voices, but my tongue has its own spring: the birthday of [Saint] Felix, who is the light through which the winter itself blossoms for the rejoicing people. Although the wintry season is in the midst of its frosts, continuing its sombre cold [and] contracting the year with its white-haired fields, these joys produced by that light, however, bring forth for us a happy spring. [...] [A description of birds singing in spring foliage follows.]

⁵⁴ Fabre, *Saint Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne*, pp. 341–43.

⁵⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 49, CSEL, 29, pp. 390–404.

⁵⁶ This section is a slightly adjusted version of sections of my article "*Divinos concipe sensus*".

⁵⁷ This is the date given to the poem by Walsh in Paulinus of Nola, *Poems*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XVIII. 30–39, CSEL, 30, p. 98.

Assent [to my request], Fountain of the word, Word God, make me now [bring forth] a harmonious sound with a sweet voice like that bird in the spring. [...] Now it whirls around graceful melodies, now it whistles with a prolonged sound; then again, beginning what seems to be a mournful song, it suddenly cuts its lament short and beguiles our astonished ears with a fragmented melody. [...]

I pray that, like that bird, it be granted to me to vary the melodies and each year bring forth the promised songs in varied language, be it from the same mouth. For bountiful grace keeps adding different subject matter through the wondrous deeds of power of the Lord, which God Christ grants in large numbers through our dear Felix, giving forth shining miracles through salvation-and-health-bringing signs.⁵⁹

In this prologue, we see more specifics of Paulinus's view of the origin and nature of Christian *poetic language* about the invisible divine — now likened to the entrancing song of a nightingale. The classical tradition of invitation to delight through the suggestion of natural beauty is here spiritualized: a spiritual spring is imaginatively produced in a wintry landscape by what is again referred to as the 'light' of Felix. Deriving largely from the Gospel of John's quoting Christ as saying that he is 'the Light of the world', light symbolism permeated Christian religiosity in this period.⁶⁰ As we shall see later in this poem, Felix, being totally transparent to Christ, is thought to transmit this light; various modes of it are central in the miracle that is there described. Whereas in this introduction the image of a spiritual event in the heart transforms that of an opposite sensorial landscape, in the subsequent description of the miracle it is conceived of as analogous to, and continuous with, the sensory event — exhibiting two different strategies of imagining the invisible in the visible.

As a Christian poet, Paulinus continues the classical tradition of calling upon a source of inspiration, but replaces the traditional Muses and their Castalian fountain with Christ as the Word of God (John 1. 1) and, what may have been understood (by the well-informed) to be, his 'well-spring rising up into eternal life'

⁵⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 1–7, 27–28, 33–36, 38–44, CSEL, 30, pp. 194–95: 'Ver avibus voces aperit, mea lingua suum ver | natalem Felicis habet, quo lumine et ipsa | floret hiems populis gaudentibus; et licet atro | frigore tempus adhuc mediis hiberna pruinis | ducat, concretum terris canentibus annum, | ista luce tamen nobis pia gaudia laetum | ver faciunt. [...] adhuc, fons verbi, verbum deus, et velut illam | me modo veris avem dulci fac voce canorum [...]. nunc teretes rotat illa modos, nunc sibila longis | ducit acuta sonis, rursum quasi flebile carmen | inchoat et subito praecidens fine querellam | adtonitas rupto modulamine decipit aures. [...] et tamen illius mihi deprecor alitis instar | donetur variare modis et pacta quotannis | carmina mutatis uno licet ore loquellis | promere, diversas quia semper gratia dives | materias miris domini virtutibus addit, | quas deus in caro Christus Felice frequentat, | clara salutifera edens miracula signis.'

⁶⁰ John 8. 12 and 9. 5. See, for instance Sanders, *Licht en duisternis in de christelijke grafchriften*.

(John 4. 14). The poet appears to think of Christ's inspiration as the direct gift of beautiful language, and does not regard it as inappropriate to ask (as one would have asked the Muses) for a language that is as melodious and variegated as the nightingale's song — perhaps hoping that the listener, now remembering having once heard that song, will thereby open his heart to expect and thereby hear a similarly captivating melody. Conditioned by the contemporary preference for extensively decorated language,⁶¹ Paulinus must have assumed that the unadorned message alone would not be aesthetically acceptable to his educated contemporaries. It is tempting to see in this passage, at first sight disproportionately long, a prefiguration, not only of a pattern of beautiful poetry awakening the heart to a new life in the spring, but — obliquely, if you will — also of what he is intending to describe in the miracle story later in the poem: the dynamic pattern of Christ and the saint's invisible grace, awakening and empowering his courier Theridius's heart, hand, and eye. Since Theridius is shown living and worshipping with Paulinus's monastic community during his stay there, it cannot be coincidental that this miracle is described in a manner that would appeal especially to their biblical knowledge and meditative spiritual concerns rather than (as the other stories) to the more practical ones of the country folk. As we shall see, its images may even be read as implicitly making a 'ray of divine truth' almost visible.

'The Ancient Enemy'

After Paulinus's request to Christ for a variegated song like the nightingale, however, there follows, at first sight somewhat incongruously, a detailed description of the saint's punishment of demons and their chief, the 'vetus hostis' (ancient Enemy) or Devil, in the possessed who had come to be healed at the shrine.⁶² Paulinus speaks of it as constituting 'those miracles we are accustomed to witness every day, when he oppresses the savage devils which form the Serpent's brood, and with hidden hand scourges the enemy until they cry out [...] bidding them evacuate human bodies'.⁶³ The 'hidden hand', here first mentioned, takes on a central role in the subsequent miracle. Sometimes, Paulinus says, the demons' raging goes on for a

⁶¹ See on this Roberts, *Jeweled Style*.

⁶² On the phenomenon of possession, see Sargent, *Mind Possessed*.

⁶³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 45–47, 50, CSEL, 30, p. 195: 'cernimus illa diem spectari sueta per omnem, | vipeream subolem, saevos cum daemona urget | occultaque manu clamoros verberat hostes [...] iubeatque hominum discedere membris'.

longer time, so that the sins of those who have deserved to become possessed may be fully expiated. At the time of the saint's feast, too, there are more of them:

At this time the fiery demons blaze more fiercely than usual. [...] They are not permitted to leave with an easy departure, but are first severely harassed by various strange punishments: raised up into the air and suspended there higher than usual, shaken in the empty airy spaces, and held fast by invisible bonds [...]. Those who appear to be enduring the physical punishments are actually free of these. Their unaffected souls observe the torments of others in their own limbs. Once the demon is captured, the person is free to act [as he wills] and the pains in his body are only apparent. He does not feel them because the torture is not that of the man but of the demon. [...]

I shall reveal even more powerful things than these which have nevertheless actually been observed. Remarkable before all others is the man whose limbs had been possessed by the Enemy for a very long time. Having been thrown out from the crowd of sick people, he was dragged to the sacred threshold of the holy martyr and placed against the sacred balustrade before the threshold of the saint; and he looked there at [the saint's] dwelling while his body hung upside down and his feet were bent over backwards. What is even stranger and more mysterious: his clothing did not tumble down over his face, as though it were rigid or sewn to his feet, so that the private parts of his body were hidden by a chaste covering.⁶⁴

Paulinus appears to be saying, like Sulpicius, that this man's body was suspended in the air. Is his description an imitation of this model? Or poetic exaggeration for effect? As with Sulpicius, there is more than likely to be an allegorical connotation. Modern observations record that the violent contorted behaviour of possession is often followed by a temporary collapse.⁶⁵ When the poet proceeds, after this, to relate the miracle that occurred in his monastery, the Devil's active but invisible

⁶⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 61, 63–68, 70–74, 82–90, CSEL, 30, pp. 196–97: 'tunc solito gravius succensi daemones ardent [...] nec abire sununtur | excessu facili, sed miris ante agitati | et variis male suppliciiis tolluntur in altum, | suspensi solito sublimius, et quatiuntur | aëriis in vacuo vinclisque latentibus haerent | poenali per inane mora; [...] solvuntur poenis, cum poenas ferre videntur | corpore, et immunes animae spectant aliena | in membris tormenta suis; homo daemone capto | liber agit, species poenarum in corpore tantum est; | sensum abest, quia non hominis sed daemonis est crux. [...] his etiam potiora, tamen spectata profabor, | ante alios illum, cui membra vetustior hostis | obsidet, ad sacri pia limina martyris aegra | excussum de plebe rapi admotumque sacratis | ante fores sancti cancellis corpore verso | suspendi pedibus spectantem tecta supinis | quodque magis mirum atque sacrum est, nec in ora relapsi | vestibus ut rigidis aut ad vestigia sutis | corporis omne sacrum casto velatur operto.' This incident, however, resembles one in Sulpicius Severus's description of Saint Martin's exorcisms (Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 6. 4, lines 19–22, SC, 510, p. 312), as well as one in Jerome's *Epist.* 108. 13, CSEL, 55, p. 323, line 7 (reference in Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 369). Felix is called a 'martyr' here but was technically a 'confessor' since he died peacefully.

⁶⁵ Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, pp. 3–4.

presence there too is implied, and repeatedly and emphatically hinted at. These more visible indications of his activity enlarged upon earlier in the poem may thus be aids to a visualization of what was invisibly happening later.

‘Manifest Evidence that the Hidden God Is Present’

Paulinus then introduces his courier Theridius’s story by addressing the listener:

Listen, I pray, to what our Lord Christ performed in him [Theridius] with various kinds of power, through all of which he works to strengthen a single faith in us, so that we may see through manifest evidence that the hidden God is present, and the heavenly Lord caring for the matters and minds of men with fatherly attention, through that Word through Whom he created everything.⁶⁶

The listener/reader, then, is alerted to look for and discern the divine presence and care in the visible event. As will become evident, to do this fully would also have required something like a meditative kind of receptiveness to the suggestive, associative echoes in the poem’s imagery. Paulinus begins the story by relating that on a certain evening when dusk had already fallen Theridius left the room, full of the smoke of wax tapers, in which the monks were singing the evening hymns, to get a breath of fresh air. Advancing confidently in a narrow unlighted corridor in the ‘nocte [...] caeca’ (blind night)⁶⁷ — the choice of this adjective points ahead to the specific lurking danger — he unwittingly approached the spot above which a glass oil lantern usually hung, attached through three hooks at the end of a cord hanging from the ceiling. At this dramatic moment, perhaps as a meditational *point d’orgue* (an extended note in music, implying an intensification and pause) but no doubt also to keep his hearers in suspense, Paulinus inserts a very long and circumstantial description — an *ekphrasis* — of the lamp itself: the white water at the bottom, the yellow oil on top, the tow wick in the middle. Its images make the object, an evident symbol of what is about to happen to Theridius, come alive.⁶⁸ Because the flame had gone out for lack of fuel during the vigils, the lamp had been removed by one of the

⁶⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, XXIII. 100–05, CSEL, 30, pp. 197–98: ‘auscultate, precor, dominus quae Christus in illo | multimoda virtute gerit, quibus omnibus unam | confirmare fidem nobis studet, ut per aperta | arcanum documenta deum videamus adesse | resque hominum et mentes studio curare paterno | caelestem dominum quo condidit omnia verbo.’

⁶⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 121, CSEL, 30, p. 198.

⁶⁸ Cf. Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, p. 155: ‘textual *ekphrases* were [...] sites for further meditational composition’.

servants. Unfortunately, however, he had forgotten to pull up the hooked cord again and tie it up with a knot — leaving it hanging at face level, 'bereft of its illumination and full of blind danger. For armed with the teeth of its menacing hooks it formed a most dreadful snare, and with these now evilly confronted our brother'.⁶⁹

The phrasing suggests, first, that the lamp is a symbol for the eye (whose roughly similar physical make-up he later describes in a pause at another crucial moment⁷⁰), and second, that the Devil is hidden but actively present in the darkness and waiting to capture Theridius's eye in the swaying hooked cord. The larger notion of the Devil's 'capturing' human souls and minds — for instance, in the possessed — resonates here. Christ, however, Paulinus continues, converted this 'feralem [...] casum' (beastly accident)⁷¹ — another pointer to the nature of the Devil — into a cause of joy for us, for 'videte manum Christi' (observe the hand of Christ [in this]).⁷² As will become evident in what follows, this specific image is a *cue* for the listener/reader, priming him to recognize more quickly the symbolic image which Paulinus will present of the active agent of the miracle about to occur.

As Theridius advanced in the darkness, one of the hooks on the cord swaying at the level of his head struck his eye and inserted itself inside the eyelid. Crying out and terrified of losing his eyeball, he clapped his hand over his eye and stood there with his head thrown back, not knowing what to do. It is at this moment that Paulinus inserts the description of the eye as it should be — perhaps another meditational *point d'orgue* and prolonging the suspense again. These delaying and visualizing literary strategies reinforce the experience of this story as a text to be imagined around rather than as a sensory event happening before one's eyes.

Then Paulinus continues the story: 'despairing of a remedy through human effort, [Theridius] prayed to Felix, who then arrived through God's aid'.⁷³ An improbably long and rhetorically patterned verbal supplication — again invented by Paulinus, of course — now follows, inviting the listener to immerse himself in it, as it were, so as to re-enact the experience, but also functioning as a lesson in correct prayer to the saint. Theridius begins by deploring what must be his great sins

⁶⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 155–57, CSEL, 30, p. 199: 'gratiae lucis inops et caeci plena pericli | nam laquei summum dentata minantibus uncis | armabatur, et his male tunc fuit obvia fratri'.

⁷⁰ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 174–83, CSEL, 30, p. 200.

⁷¹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 159, CSEL, 30, p. 200.

⁷² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 160, CSEL, 30, p. 200.

⁷³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 197–99, CSEL, 30, p. 201: 'sed desperante medellam | ex ope mortali divina mox ope Felix | inploratus adest'.

deserving this affliction, in spite of being Felix's client and neighbour, and on his very birthday, and then asks for help:

Holy man, I implore you, rescue your own! I know that you are near, and that from the adjoining building you have directed your ears to this place and heard, o Felix, the plaint of your miserable foster child. Or, if you now reside as confessor and friend close to the side of the Great King and before his throne in heaven, carry these words of your poor [suppliant] through the clouds to the ears of God! [...]

Hasten, I pray, and place your holy hands against my eye that threatens to fall from its socket. Pull out the iron which you see implanted there, which I do not dare to draw out with my own hand, lest I deprive myself of eye-light in attempting to rid myself of the javelin. [...]

You alone, Hand of God, which created our eyes themselves in us, gave [Felix] the healing power, with which [he] tortures and overcomes dark demons, with which [he] expels all pain from sick bodies through the lofty name of Christ, powerful through the almighty Lord: [o Felix,] now undertake to heal me under his guidance.⁷⁴

Felix's hand is coalesced with that of Christ. And the earlier description of the demons' punishment now serves to prove the saint's power to overcome the invisible Enemy also here, in the dark corridor. Theridius thereupon proceeds to remind Felix of everything he has sacrificed and left behind in order to dedicate himself to him as his patron, and to pressure the saint, saying: 'I threw myself upon your [protection]; now show [that protection] by helping me in this', and do this 'in laudem domini' (to enhance the Lord's praise)⁷⁵ — a request which the saint could hardly refuse.

'The Helping Hand of the Holy Felix'

While the naive (*simplex*) man was praying such things, Paulinus continues (we notice authorial distancing here), 'behold, the helping hand of the holy Felix was

⁷⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 206–12, 216–19, 222–28, CSEL, 30, pp. 201–02: 'sancte, precor, succurre tuo; scio, proximus adstas | et de contigua missis huc auribus aede | audisti, Felix, fletum infelicis alumni; | sive modo excelso lateri coniunctus adhaeres | ante throrum magni regis confessor amicus, | pauperis hanc, venerande, tui trans nubila vocem | accipis aure dei [...] curre, precor, sanctasque manus oppone minanti | lapsus oculo et fixum quod conspicias erue ferrum, | quod propria revocare manu non audeo, ne me | lumine despoliem, dum conor solvere telo. [...] tu tantum, divina manus, quae condidit ipsos | in nobis oculos, quae te quoque dextra potentem | sanifera virtute dedit, qua demonas atros | excruciendo domas, qua corporis omne caduci, | pellere tormentum potes alto nomine Christi, | omnipotente potens domino; quo praesule nunc me | suscipe sanandum.' The last part of the passage is somewhat obscurely worded.

⁷⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 247, 249–50, CSEL, 30, p. 203: 'me iacto tuum; quod in hac ope monstra'.

at once present, and with his breath he silently strengthened the hesitating mind and hand [of Theridius], so that he was not afraid to extract the metal safely'.⁷⁶ No wound resulted, only a rush of tears, and once 'the eye had been purged of the immense, dark danger, it shone with the same pure brilliance which, all healed, it is seen to have today: shining with the gift of the eternal Christ'.⁷⁷ This image becomes understandable when one remembers that eyes were then thought to *emit* light.⁷⁸ The gift of Theridius's ray of eye-light, then, can be imaginatively understood to make not only Christ's light, but — obliquely — also this miracle's 'ray of divine truth' visible, as it were. What had happened, Paulinus explains, was that the 'divina [...] manus' (Hand of God) had prevented a wound by making the point of the metal harmless and its weight light.⁷⁹

This elicits a surge of praise of this 'Hand' that heals without hurt: what could it be other than

the Hand that made all things? It was the Spirit of God that everywhere enters into all the elements of things, finer than any gossamer, [...] who made the man born blind have new eyes [...] through the creative art with which he made the whole world: it was the Son of God, the Hand and the Wisdom of the Father, the all-begetting Source and Sustainer of things: Christ.⁸⁰

Paulinus has here transformed the Old Testament image of 'manus Domini' (the hand of the Lord)⁸¹ into a symbol of Christ — and also associatively evokes the palpable hand of the incarnated Christ in his reference to the cure of the man born blind, an event that represents the enlightenment of the whole human race.⁸²

⁷⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 255–58, CSEL, 30, p. 203: 'manus ecce beati | prospera mox Felicis adest dubiamque timentis | adspirans tacite firmat mentemque manumque, | ne timeat tuto ausurus producere ferrum'.

⁷⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 262–64, CSEL, 30, p. 203: 'mox oculus tanti purgatus nocte pericli | tam puro enituit speculo, quam nunc quoque sanus | cernitur aeterni conluens munere Christi'.

⁷⁸ Miles, 'Vision'.

⁷⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 274–75, CSEL, 30, p. 204.

⁸⁰ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 289–91, 295–97, CSEL, 30, pp. 204–05: 'quae [...] manus omnia fecit? | spiritus ille dei penetrator ubique per omnes | naturas rerum, tenui subtilior omni, [...] qua totum perficit orbem, | filius ille dei, manus et sapientia patris, | omniparens rerum fons et constantia, Christus'.

⁸¹ Numbers 11. 23 and often. It appears in the Old Testament mosaics in the mid-sixth-century church of S. Vitale in Ravenna.

⁸² John 9. 1; other cures by Jesus's hand: Matthew 8. 3 and 15, 9. 25; Mark 1. 31 and 41, 5. 41, 6. 2.

Thereupon, Paulinus praises ‘ipse opifex, lux nostra, deus’ (the Creator himself, God our Light), who — not needing to adorn his martyr more than he had already done — ‘nobis voluit specialem tempore isto | laetitiam donare’ (wished to bestow upon us a special joy at this time), by giving a sign (*signum*) that would teach the heavenly Felix’s foster children⁸³ (presumably, he means especially his community)

to live through his merit and care, by which, as our guardian, he preserves our safety and always protects our limbs as well as our minds against the attacking Enemy in the dangers of the night [cf. Psalm 19. 6 (20. 6)]. [...]

Rightly, I hold this man [Theridius] as dear as my own eyes, for in his eye-light the hand of Felix, my glory in Christ, shines. O happy accident, goodly wound, sweet danger, through which I have come to know that the martyr cares for me! So great a thing was it for me to nearly lose that light in order that I might now have light through Felix’s gift.⁸⁴

These words betray Paulinus’s intense emotional dependence upon his image of the caring, protecting saint which is evident throughout the *Natalicia* (but, as already indicated, very infrequent in his extant letters), as well as what looks like a certain unreflective egocentrism. It may be, however, that, despite his many attributions of events to Felix, this was the closest that he himself ever came to observing a concrete, demonstrable miracle of the saint; and since Theridius belonged to his company, Paulinus could regard it as meant for him.

But there is also a second level of meaning: that of Paulinus’s inner illumination through this miracle. For how should we understand Felix’s hand to be shining in Theridius’s eye-light? Not visualizable here without incongruity, it must represent what Paulinus had designated as the Creator Christ’s ‘finer-than-gossamer’, invisible dynamic pattern of mental and physical empowerment, which has just been carried out by being embodied in Theridius’s own visible hand. What we see Paulinus here actually presenting, and even explaining, is his envisioning of an abstract divine pattern or law: this image of a ‘hand’ is in fact a ‘divinus sensus’, a divine apprehension through a symbol, which he conceived through observing — and, as he subsequently says, being ‘illuminated’ by — the visible miracle.

For the last two lines, although obscurely worded (perhaps because of the constraints of poetic metre), point to the other main image — or ‘divinus sensus’ —

⁸³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 309, 317–18, CSEL, 30, p. 205.

⁸⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXIII. 321–24, 330–35, CSEL, 30, pp. 205–06: ‘merito illius curaue doceret | vivere, quo nostram servans custode salutem | saepius infestum nocturnis casibus hostem | a nostris pariter membris et mentibus arcet. [...] iure oculis hunc aequo meis, in lumine cuius | Felicis manus in Christo, mea gloria, fulget. | o felix casus, bona vulnera, dulce periculum, | per quod cognovi me curam martyris esse, | tanti namque fuit lumen mihi paene perisse, | ut modo Felicis de munere lumen haberem.’

in Paulinus's presentation of this miracle. It appears to indicate that, through his performatively re-enacting Theridius's regaining of his eyesight, Paulinus experienced an analogous illumination in his mind through the event's 'ray of divine truth' and that he intended the meditative listening or reading of his poem to induce a similar experience of illumination in the listener or reader. The idea, connected with the already-mentioned theory of vision, that one becomes what one sees, was an ancient one, occurring in Plato and the Church Fathers.⁸⁵ Karl Morrison's studies of literary reception in the west have eloquently shown this process happening.⁸⁶ And modern psychological studies of the effects of meditation and affective imagery have also shown that *not only the mind but also the body spontaneously tends to mimic and replicate a pattern that is affectively absorbed through beholding its expression in a visible image, mental or pictorial*.⁸⁷ Properly and actively apprehended, then, Paulinus's poetic presentation of this miracle of restored eyesight could also precipitate the listener's interior divine illumination in 'conceiving' and thereby envisioning the 'divinus sensus' of the invisible Hand of God in this visible miracle.

I Shall Declare a Miracle': Sensing Felix's Help

In his stories about Martin, we saw Sulpicius revealing his emotional dependence upon the saint as a spiritual model who lifted up his life to a new level and helped him to stay there with the vision of his departure for heaven and the message-miracle of the fallen flask.⁸⁸ Paulinus's poems that, as we saw often, address the dead saint himself tell us a great deal more about his personal experience. It is possible that his descriptions owe something to the experience described by Bishop Basil of Caesarea at the beginning of his sermon on the martyr Mamas.⁸⁹ What we see there is that the martyrs were not only models for the Christian life, but also functioned as a kind of guardian angel:⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Javelet, *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle*, I, 8, 31, 37.

⁸⁶ Morrison, 'I am you'; and Morrison, *History as a Visual Art in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*.

⁸⁷ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, pp. 214–15. On clinical studies of meditation, see Deikman, 'Experimental Meditation', and Kretschmer, 'Meditative Techniques in Psychotherapy'.

⁸⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 3. 1–4, SC, 510, pp. 296–98; Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, II. 3, SC, 133, pp. 324–26.

⁸⁹ On Basil and martyrs, see also Allen, 'Introduction', pp. 55–77.

⁹⁰ On the guardian angel in the Christian tradition, see Michl, 'Engel IV (christlich)'.

I wish you to remember the martyr, however many of you who have enjoyed his presence in your dreams. Let all those gathered in this place remember him who have experienced his help through praying; those to whom he appeared at once when they were working, at the same time that his name was voiced; those whom he led back safely from a voyage; those whom he raised up from illness; those to whom he restored their dead children's life; those whose lives he lengthened.⁹¹

What Paulinus tells us about his personal experiences is similar to this.

At the end of the poem about the miracle on Theridius, we saw that the poet evidently felt a deep need to interpret even a miracle upon someone else as a message to himself that confirms his special relationship with the saint.⁹² In this he continues an attitude already evident in his earliest, much shorter, poems addressed to Felix. In the first (*Carmen* XII), written in January 395 while still in Spain, Paulinus regrets his long absence from the saint's shrine, understanding it as a punishment for his wickedness, and prays for a safe journey to his shrine, 'obtritis quae nos inimica retardant' (those [forces] having been destroyed that, as enemies, delay us).⁹³ This could be an oblique reference to supposed demonic forces inciting the clergy of Barcelona, who had just pressed the priestly ordination upon him, no doubt hoping for his service and benefactions, to try to keep him there. Since he had accepted it, however, on condition that he would not serve this particular church, leaving as soon as possible must have been the practical thing to do. Instead, the poet looks forward to his self-chosen 'servitium' (service),⁹⁴ a term that could also mean slavery, at the shrine in Nola.

The next *Natalicium* (*Carmen* XIII) thanks the saint for the safe arrival and expresses joy at finally celebrating his birthday near him. Paulinus then remembers that it has been fifteen years

since on this holy feast I dedicated my prayers and my heart [to you] in your presence. You have known what labours on land and sea have since then kept me in a distant world far from your abode, for I have always and everywhere felt you near me, and called upon you in the hardships of travel and the uncertainties of life. [...] for I felt your protection in Christ the Lord when I overcame rough seas.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Basil of Caesarea (Basilius Caesariensis (Magnus)), *Homilia*, XXIII. 1: *In sanctum martyrem Mamantem*, PG, 31, col. 589C–D.

⁹² On Paulinus in Nola, see Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 104–32.

⁹³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XII. 21, CSEL, 30, p. 43.

⁹⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XII. 33, CSEL, 30, p. 44.

⁹⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XIII. 8–13, 15–16, CSEL, 30, p. 46: 'ex quo sollemnibus istis | coram vota tibi, coram mea corda dicavi. | ex illo qui me terraque marique labores | distulerint a sede

After describing the happy crowds at the feast, Paulinus congratulates the Nolans with their eminent protector, and then gratefully tells the saint that after enduring the waves of the worldly life as well as of the physical world, he has reached the saint's peaceful haven and tied up his ship there, 'so let [now] the anchor of my ordered life be held fast in you'.⁹⁶ The image of Felix that Paulinus has discovered in his memory and in himself, then, has now evidently become the only graspable fixed point in his life. We will see him burnishing and expanding it, and finding evidence for its reality and power whenever and wherever he can.

The third birthday poem (*Carmen* XIII), in 397, begins with briefly remembering the saint's asceticism as a bloodless martyrdom — was Paulinus silently thinking of his own ascetic abstinences as well? Then he turns to describe the demons in the possessed as, again, proving the saint's presence: they are said to groan with their hidden torments, also crying out, however, 'that Christ shines in his saint, and they prove it by trembling with shaking limbs and swivelling heads and by their tortures'.⁹⁷ Christ's presence is emphasized too when, on the feast day, people are freed from these oppressors and lie prostrate, giving thanks. They are surrounded by a crowd trembling and weeping with emotion: 'all believe God to be present; Felix is the glory of Christ who is boundless'.⁹⁸ Then the origins of the various people who have come for the feast are mentioned, and the festive decoration of the shrine. Finally, Felix is asked to plead for all of them at the Last Judgement — this, of course, is a strong underpinning of the saint's cult. So far, no specific miracle is recounted in detail. But this is the year that Paulinus must have received Sulpicius's *Life of Martin*, with its many miracles, and as we saw he thereupon proceeded to write his own *Life of Felix*.⁹⁹

tua procul orbe remoto, | novisti; nam te mihi semper ubique propinquum | inter dura viae vitaeque incerta vocavi. [...] nam tua sensi | praesidia in domino superans maris aspera Christo'.

⁹⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XIII. 36, CSEL, 30, p. 45: 'in te, conpositae mihi fixa sit anchora vitae'.

⁹⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XIII. 30–33, CSEL, 30, p. 47: 'Christum | in sancto fulgere suo clamantque probantque, | membrorum incussu tremuli capitumque rotatu | tormentisque suis'.

⁹⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XIII. 42–43, CSEL, 30, p. 47: 'praesens deus omnibus illic | creditur; inmensi Felix est gloria Christi'.

⁹⁹ Since it does not contain information about how *contemporary* miracles were experienced, I have chosen not to discuss it here.

‘Present Through the Almost Physical Act’

If we look at later events in which Paulinus himself sensed the saint to be active, that of the fire at the shrine in 401 is arresting, not in the least because two years later its sparing the shrine’s buildings is ascribed to a different agent. The eighth *Natalicium* (*Carmen* XXVI) of January 402, which contains the first description of the fire, is in fact a long insistent prayer for deliverance from the Visigoths then invading Italy (a Roman victory at Pollentia a few months later would save the situation for the moment).¹⁰⁰ Its form is a classic one in prayers — and magic. As we saw, the reciting of a story of divine help in the past (a so-called *historiola*) is followed by the request — and even expectation — that the same form of help can, should, and will be repeated in the present time.¹⁰¹

This birthday poem begins with a call to everyone to forget the present troubles, and to celebrate and trust in their patron protector, saying that these troubles are a punishment for their sins. Faith, however, will save them just as, in many specific instances, God’s people were saved by their faith in Old Testament times. The recurring image in the many examples given is that physical arms are powerless against spiritual power and that ‘nuda fides armata deo est’ (naked faith is armed by God).¹⁰² And just as the prophet Isaiah was the mediator for King Hezekiah, ‘let Felix now be that for us to the Lord. Let us cast up our cares and entrust our fears to Felix’.¹⁰³ After remembering how Moses, Loth, and Elijah saved their people with their prayers, Paulinus says that Felix will be ready to do the same now: ‘just as ancient times once had these men, so now let our allotted well-being ask Felix for all that it dares and, trusting in such a patron, hope for what it desires’.¹⁰⁴

Paulinus then calls on Felix, like Joshua who bade the sun and moon to stand still, likewise to ‘famulis elementis praecipe’ (bid the elements that serve you)¹⁰⁵ to

¹⁰⁰ By Stilicho’s victory over the Goths at Pollentia in April 402: Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, p. 117; on this poem: p. 118.

¹⁰¹ See on this Versnel, ‘Poetics of the Magical Charm’, esp. pp. 122–26. Similarly Frankfurter, ‘Narrating Power’.

¹⁰² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 166, CSEL, 30, p. 252.

¹⁰³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 196–98, CSEL, 30, p. 253: ‘ad dominum nobis isto sit tempore Felix. | iactemus nostras et transfundamus in istum | curas atque metus’.

¹⁰⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 230–32, CSEL, 30, p. 254: ‘ut quondam hos habuit vetus aetas, sic modo nostra | Felicem sortita salus petat omne quod audet | quodque cupit tali speret confisa patrono’.

¹⁰⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 250, CSEL, 30, p. 255.

help until Rome is victorious. Then introducing the polyvalent images of beasts and fires that will from then on dominate the poem, Paulinus says that, just as Daniel tamed the lions by prayer,

thus for you, Felix, must let the savage barbarians be tamed by Christ's shattering [them] so that they lie as captives at your feet. This is how the beasts once lay around the prophet and licked his feet with benevolent tongues while he prayed, God changing their nature [...]. So too the fire confounded the cruel tyrant as he saw the furnace obey the holy young men [in Babylon] [...]. Just as a dew-laden spirit quenched the blazing fires when the young men caused hymns of eternal life to resound, so now may Felix's grace restrain the fires of war with a peaceful breeze wafted by God.¹⁰⁶

But why, Paulinus then asks, should he cite only ancient examples when there are recent examples of Felix's powers? For although Felix did not perform the same feats as the prophets, he is 'nam patriarcharum, Felix, et filius aequae | stirpis apostolicae es' (the son of the patriarchs and equal to the stock of the apostles),¹⁰⁷ and shares their powers, since 'quoniam sanctis fons omnibus unus' (there is one source for all holy men).¹⁰⁸ For the God who made the beasts gentle towards Daniel and chilled the fires for the young men 'has also, by heavenly law, granted Felix the power to dominate the destructive legions of Satan, through which he subdues all beasts and flames'.¹⁰⁹ Animals and fire, then, are manifestations of the Devil.

The story of a particularly horrible case of possession — by implication, a manifestation of the beastly nature of Satan — and its cure then follows. Paulinus alerts the listener to the fact, evidenced here, that demons have the impulses of beasts but here does not identify this behaviour as formerly that of a known Bacchic rite. For this unfortunate man snatched living hens from people's houses and devoured them feathers and all, licked dead animals, and chewed abandoned carcasses of cattle.¹¹⁰ Further down, he is described as foaming at the lips, constantly shaking

¹⁰⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 256–61, 263–64, 269–72, CSEL, 30, pp. 255–56: 'sic tibi, Felix, | effera barbaries Christo frangente dometur | et tua captivi iaceant vestigia circum. | sic aliquando ferae circum iacere prophetam | orantisque pedes linguis mulsero benignis, | naturam mutante deo [...] sic et crudelem confudit flamma tyrannum | sanctis spectantem pueris servire caminos [...] sed velut aeternos pueris recinentibus hymnos | roscidus accensos discussit spiritus ignes. | sic nobis placido Felicis gratia flatu | adspirante deo bellorum temperet ignes.'

¹⁰⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 283–84, CSEL, 30, p. 256.

¹⁰⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 289, CSEL, 30, p. 256.

¹⁰⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 303–05, CSEL, 30, p. 257: 'ipse dedit celso Felicem iure potentem | pestiferis Satanae legionibus inperitare, | in quibus iste feras omnes conpescit et ignes'.

¹¹⁰ Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, pp. 100–01, describes this kind of possessed behaviour.

and jumping up and down, hiccuping and belching (from the chicken feathers?). Now, restored to his former self by Felix, he quietly tends a small rented garden in the vicinity.

After a conceit in which the poet plays with the antithetical notions of the demons' satanic fire being overcome by healing heavenly fire, the image of beasts recurs when the saint's separating the noxious demon from the man's soul is then compared to Moses's rod swallowing up the magicians' serpents. But, Paulinus says, the God of the prophets is also the God of the present-day saints, for 'every day we witness in dense crowds pressing on every side either healed men bringing tokens of gratitude, or the sick praying for and experiencing various cures'¹¹¹ — none of which Paulinus ever describes, however. Others, from faraway places, he claims, attest their rescue from storms at sea. Where are their stories?

After all these older examples, the diabolic image of fire becomes central in the remembering of the recent blaze that almost destroyed the shrine and its buildings. The memory of this, the poet says, increased his love for Felix,

whom we saw to be present through the almost physical act of holding out his hand against the flames, thereby protecting our thresholds which adjoined his. The flame was almost touching it, but then shrank back as if terrified by the saint's face blocking its way. Then, repelled from consuming the top of our roof, it burned itself out in the nearby levelling of a hut. I shall declare a miracle: the air remained motionless without a breath of wind, no breeze making the leaves of the woodland tremble, so that the consuming fire could not advance further by leaping along the interwoven beams of our joined dwellings. Left to itself by the failing winds, the flame refused to spread, and when its food was exhausted it died of inanition.¹¹²

Here, one suspects, Paulinus 'declared a miracle' because he wanted and needed to believe that the good outcome — entirely possible merely through what he clearly and circumstantially tells us was the result of a lack of wind — was arranged by the saint for his benefit. This would give him the confidence that the saint, if asked,

¹¹¹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 384–86, CSEL, 30, p. 260: 'omni namque die testes sumus undique crebris | coetibus aut sanos gratantia reddere nota | aut aegros varias petere ac sentire medellas'.

¹¹² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 401–12, CSEL, 30, p. 261: 'quem prope corporeo praesentem vidimus actu | obiectare manus flammis et nostra tueri | limina iuncta suis, quae tamquam territa sancti | obstantis facie prope tangens flamma pavebat | pulsaque de nostri rapiendo culmine tecti | comminus in tuguri vicina strage perarsit. | mira loquar, stetit inmotus sine flatibus aether | nec nemorum foliis ullum dedit aura tremorem, | ne posset rapidus procedere longius ignis | per contexta volans sociarum tigna domorum, | sed ventis deserta cadentibus ire negaret | flamma et consumpto moreretur languida pastu.'

would similarly protect him in the present situation of military endangerment through a similar act of standing there and holding out his hand. Paulinus evidently needs to visualize everything — thus a 'hand' (again) and 'an almost physical act'. What he probably meant to say is that the flames' not leaping across to the other buildings suggested to him the mental image of the saint standing there and holding them back with his raised hand — an image which he believed must be that of the invisible acting reality. For our secular world view, the lack of wind could be a coincidence, negating the miracle — if the latter is understood to be a contravention of nature. We see here that this was not Paulinus's view. Not only did he attach significance to the order of events, he also regarded the elements of nature as controlled by spiritual powers, and here by the saint. The appearance of the mental image, then, was a 'divination', as it were, of the visible event, envisioning its spiritual dynamic. The saint's *face* 'terrifying' the flames, however, is a conspicuous image. Paulinus's Gallic namesake would later say something similar about the living Saint Martin.

After all these Old Testament and recent examples of divine power, Paulinus comes to his bottom line, his request: 'in a similar way, Felix, deliver us from our dangers by your help'.¹¹³ The saint is urged to keep the war away by 'putting on that strength'¹¹⁴ with which he had once redirected a stream when it had overflowed its banks and was rushing towards the shrine — another recent miracle and a *historiola* to be re-enacted. Weaving all the symbols he has brought into play around and into material facts, Paulinus continues, unabashed:

In the same way now divert from our region the battles advancing as a river of war cries. Let the wicked hand stay away from the sacred boundaries, which has your grace as a wall. And let the enemies fear your church as the demons do, let no bloodshed violate this [shrine] from which fire and stream have fled.¹¹⁵

What we have seen in this poem is that Paulinus builds up a large cluster of interlocking and analogous miraculous image-patterns in the ancient and recent past and demands that the present conform to this. Patterns of past miracles are assumed to be timeless divine dynamics that can legitimately be called upon to shape present

¹¹³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 413, CSEL, 30, p. 261: 'consimili modo nos, Felix, opesolve periclis'.

¹¹⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 416, CSEL, 30, p. 261: 'illam [...] virtutem [...] indue'.

¹¹⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVI. 425–29, CSEL, 30, p. 261: 'Sic modo bellisono venientes flumine pugnās | de nostris averte locis. manu in pia sacris | finibus absistat, quibus est tua gratia vallum | atque tuam timeant hostes quasi daemones aulam, | nec cruor haec violet quae flamma vel unda refugit.'

earthly events. Paulinus's community was indeed spared that year, but Augustine reports that Paulinus himself was temporarily taken prisoner and his buildings suffered some spoliation and destruction in the aftermath of the Visigothic sack of Rome in 410.¹¹⁶ In Augustine's treatise on the care for the dead, written for and at the request of Paulinus in 421/23, he mentions Paulinus's report of an apparition of Felix as a defender during that siege.¹¹⁷ This information may derive from a lost poem or letter by Paulinus.¹¹⁸

Two years later, in 404, the buoyant tenth *Natalicium* (*Carmen* XXVIII) proudly describes the now completed elaborate and elegant buildings which Paulinus had caused to be erected around Felix's tomb. Again, the visible represents the invisible; at the end of the poem, the buildings and their gardens are said to be images of the inner edifices of faith. In this context, however, the fire of two years earlier is now presented in a very different way. After describing an open court in front of the joined new buildings that invites strolling and gatherings and makes their facade visible from afar, Paulinus says:

I shall now briefly relate the sign which our revered Felix recently showed us on this spot. In the middle of the open space facing the threshold of our venerable church there stood two huts of branches woven [with mud]. Inconveniently placed and ugly to look at, the abject structures ruined the whole beauty of the buildings by obscuring the view [upon them] by their abominable interposition. For the door of the basilica, when it was open, was darkened by the little hut's blocking [of the light], so that its being open was in fact a being shut. When we wished to remove these huts, those who occupied these abodes resisted us with words, swearing to put their lives at risk rather than be forced to move out of their homes.¹¹⁹

Paulinus then says that one night a spark from the deserted hearth in one of these huts landed on a nearby heap of hay (for the animals also sleeping there?) and quickly set the whole dwelling afire. The heat was extreme and the tall flames sprayed sparks

¹¹⁶ Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 119–20; Augustine, *Civ. dei*, I. 10, lines 57–65, CCSL, 47, pp. 11–12. On Paulinus's contacts with Augustine, see Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 236–38, 244–46.

¹¹⁷ Augustine, *De cura*, XVI. 19, CSEL, 41, p. 652, lines 12–16. Cf. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 244–46.

¹¹⁸ See Lehmann, 'Zu Alarich's Beutezug in Campanien'.

¹¹⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVIII. 60–72, CSEL, 30, pp. 293–94: 'quale loco signum Felix venerandus in isto | ediderit nuper, celeri narrabo relatu. | in medio campi contra venerabilis aulae | limina de ligno duo texta tegilla manebant, | inportuna situ simul et deformia visu, | quae decus omne operum perimebant inproba, foedo | obice prospectum caecantia; namque patentis | ianua basilicae tuguri brevis interiectu | obscurata fores in cassum clausa patebat. | haec amoliri cupientibus obvia nobis | verba dabant tectis qui metabantur in illis | iurabantque prius vitam se posse pacisci | quam cogi migrare locis.'

over the nearby roofs, so that in the dark it seemed as if the whole complex of buildings was on fire. Then he speaks in the present tense about his own role, imaginatively re-enacting the event as though it were happening at that very moment:

relying on faith and supplicant prayer alone, we run to the nearby threshold of my Felix, and from there run to the neighbouring church, with similar prayers, pressing our lips upon the altar in which the apostles' ashes were enclosed as we call for a remedy from their power. On the way back to my own residence, I take out [from this church] that piece of wood, small [in itself] but great for salvation, which was obtained for me from a fragment of the eternal Cross. Holding it in my hand, I carry it all the way up to the adverse flames, holding it as a shield before my breast, by which I might protect myself and ward off the destructive Enemy by a thrust of the boss.

Believe and impute nothing to me, but render thanks to Christ, and give deserved praise to the Almighty; for our salvation resides in the Cross and in the name of Christ. [...] No word or hand of mine terrified that fire, but the power of the Cross, which compelled the flames to die down in the very place where they had arisen, so that the flame was walled in within set limits. [...] How great is the power of the Cross! So that nature might abandon her [usual course], the fire which devours all wood was burned by the wood of the Cross. [...] So I put out the fire with wood: the flame which water could not [overcome] was defeated by a tiny splinter.¹²⁰

Here Paulinus imagines a spiritual inversion — the holy wood of the Cross inverting the natural quality of wood as food for fire — as the model of the miracle, and Felix is given another, very different role. When daylight came, the poet continues, it was seen that only one of the offending huts — which he then says he would have had demolished anyway — had been consumed. So, he blithely continues, 'here too, Felix's grace decided upon a gift to us: by anticipating our work through the useful flames, he shortened it for us'.¹²¹ The occupant, he adds, was thereby

¹²⁰ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVIII. 110–22, 125–28, 130–31, 136–37, CSEL, 30, pp. 296–97: 'currimus ergo fide tantum et prece subplice nixi | ad vicina mei Felicis limina et inde | contigua paribus votis adcurrimus aulam | atque ab apostolici cineris virtute medellam | poscimus, inpositis subiecti altaribus ora. | ipse domum remeans modicum sed grande saluti | de crucis aeternae sumptum mihi fragmine lignum | promo tenensque manu adversis procul ingero flammis, | ut clipeum retinens pro pectore, quo tegerem me | arceremque hostem conlato umbone relisum. | credite nec donate mihi, sed reddite Christo | grates et iustas date laudas omnipotenti; | nostra salus etenim cruce Christi et in nomine constat [...] nec mea vox aut dextra illum, sed vis crucis ignem | terruit inque loco, de quo surrexerat ipso, | ut circumsaeptam praescripto limite flammam | sidere [...] quanta crucis virtus! ut se natura relinquat, | omnia ligna vorans ligno crucis uritur ignis. [...] nos ligno extinximus ignem, | quamque aqua non poterat vicit brevis astula flammam.'

¹²¹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVIII. 148–51, CSEL, 30, pp. 297–98: 'et hoc Felicis gratia nobis | munere consuluit, quod praeveniendo laborem | utilibus flammis operum compendia nobis | praestitit'.

punished by the saint for his defiance, also by now being required to demolish the other hut with his own hands.¹²²

Comparing these two versions, we see that Paulinus has no problem with offering differing interpretations of the same event.¹²³ The particle of the Holy Cross had been given to his wife Therasia by Paulinus's relative Melania upon her visit to Nola in 400.¹²⁴ What we see Paulinus doing, consciously or not, is interpreting certain successions of events as 'miracles' specifically addressing his needs in order to justify and support his role at the shrine. Poetic 'divination', as well as its presentation, can evidently be influenced and even changed by changing personal needs and choices. As also with Ambrose, the story of a perceived miracle can become a powerful image through which anxieties can be relieved and attitudes in one's human environment manipulated.

'A Father and a Guardian'

At the end of the last extant complete birthday poem, the thirteenth *Natalicium* (*Carmen* XXI), written in 407, we see Paulinus doing this again. The poem begins by thanking the saint, together with all the martyrs, for his delivery of the region from the Visigoths — their army had been defeated (as it turned out, temporarily) near Fiesole in the previous year. Coming then to Felix's benefits to his own community, Paulinus first describes at some length the addition to his monastic community of a number of new recruits, as well as some aristocratic visitors.

Next, in a long section, he recalls all that Felix has done for him personally during his life, as he now sees it.¹²⁵ If a clue can be found to the poet's emotional dependence upon Felix, it is here that we should look. Although Paulinus is, as always, expansive, it is important to listen to his own way of putting this:

You sowed the first seeds of heavenly things in me, in the hope that I could attain them, by [bringing about] events that would lead me to salvation. When as a boy I was taken here from the western regions of the Gauls, at the first moment that I set foot with a trembling step on your threshold and saw the wondrous testimonies of your holy deeds shining at your doorways, [...] I drank in with my whole heart a faith in the name of God, and rejoicing in your light, I began to love Christ. Under your leadership I wielded the *fascis*-bearing office in my early years, while you guided my hand and looked out for my welfare,

¹²² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVIII. 60–166, CSEL, 30, pp. 293–98.

¹²³ As also Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, p. 171.

¹²⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 31. 1, CSEL, 29, p. 268, lines 5–7.

¹²⁵ On Paulinus's self-portraiture here and elsewhere, see Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 15–22.

so that I remained untainted by the dangerous [shedding of] human blood. Then, too, I shaved off my first beard as a libation before your tomb, as though I was shaved by your plucking them out. At that time already, I pledged a promise to honour your abode, and settled upon making my home in the region of Campania. You laid the foundations of your servant's future resting-place when, inspiring a concern in the silence of my heart, you ordered that a road leading to your dwelling be made and paved, and that over a large space close to your own gables a roof should rise [for a hospice for the poor].¹²⁶

The building of the road would have been upon his authority as the provincial governor in the years 380–81. As will be seen, what Paulinus says later about how he came to leave Gaul makes this first decision (*fixi*) to settle in Campania seem to be a piously enhanced memory of an impulse and inclination rather than a historical fact. After briefly mentioning the recent architectural additions to the shrine, Paulinus then remembers returning to Gaul at his mother's request and his subsequent journey to Spain, where he married. There too, although separated by the sea, he now recalls,

in my mind, however, I was never torn from this place [Nola]. I always clung to Felix's embrace, and in return felt Felix attending to my affairs and bringing all of them to a good end, at home and abroad. With Christ God's approval, Felix alone was my wealth and my protection, constantly deflecting adversities and ensuring my welfare.

You, Felix, were always my happiness, so that I might not be miserable; through your love you were ever a father and a guardian to me. [For] when I was distressed by the bloody slaughter of my brother, and my brother's case endangered me as a blood relation — a buyer already laying hands on my property — you, my father, kept my neck away from the sword and my patrimony from being confiscated, reserving me and my possessions for Christ the Lord. [...] The immeasurable outcome made clear [why all this had happened]; the destiny and plan of my life had been changed: through faith I renounced the world, my native region, and my home. To thrive in its affairs, [my life] needed another land, and getting rid of all my property bought the carrying of the Cross.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 365–70, 372–85, CSEL, 30, p. 170: 'tu mihi caelestum, si possem, adtingere, rerum | prima salutiferis iecisti semina causis. | nam puer occiduis gallorum advectus ab orbis | ut primum tetigi trepido tua limina gressu, | admiranda videns operum documenta sacrorum | pro foribus fervere tuis, [...] toto corde fidem divini nominis hausi | inque tuo gaudens adamavi lumine Christum. | te duce fascigerum gessi primaevus honorem | teque meam moderante manum, servante salutem, | purus ab humani sanguis descrimine mansi. | tunc etiam primae <puer> libamina barbae | ante tuum solium quasi te carpente totondi; | iam tunc praemisso per honorem pignore sedis | Campanis metanda locis habitacula fixi, | te fundante tui ventura cubilia servi, | cum tacita inspirans curam mihi mente iuberis | muniri sternique viam ad tua tecta ferentem | adtiguumque tuis longo consurgere tractu | culminibus tegimen.'

¹²⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 407–20, 423–27, CSEL, 30, pp. 171–72: 'mente tamen numquam divulsus ab ista | sede fui semperque sinu Felicis inhaesi | inque vicem sensi Felicem

Here again, it is explicitly the order of events and their outcome that, for Paulinus, manifest divine guidance. The fact that he speaks of his life's plan having been 'mutata' (changed) seems to point to the 'decision' to settle in Campania having been at least unattended to until distressing circumstances — which remain unclear — made a move from his native country and the sale of his possessions there a practical necessity.¹²⁸ A long discourse follows about the opposition between earthly possessions and heavenly salvation. His new wealth, Paulinus says, is Felix's shrine with all its buildings. Characteristically translating the image into a symbol, however, he then says that 'Felix himself, by God's gift, is the house in which my life possesses a living house that will not crumble in any number of years'.¹²⁹ This image resembles his feeling himself constantly 'embraced' by the saint. One wonders what his relationship was with his father; if then still alive, he is likely to have strenuously objected to Paulinus's choice for exile and the disposal of his properties. After this, there is another lengthy didactic section on heavenly and earthly goods and their relation to salvation — to justify his own decision, perhaps, or also to inspire his wealthy visitors?

Not only has Felix 'given' him the beautiful shrine, another, recent, event too is interpreted as a special token of the saint's love for him, through which 'you, father, have granted us your inner self'.¹³⁰ In Latin, *viscera* (guts) often has the connotation of 'heart' or inmost feelings.¹³¹ According to Paulinus, it was nothing other than this which the saint offered by arranging to have his tomb temporarily uncovered. What had happened is that the holes in the silver covering over the marble slab of the saint's tomb, through which perfumed oil was customarily poured by the faithful to be collected again as a sacred medicine through its contact

adsistere nostris | rebus in omne bonum per cuncta domique forisque | conficienda. mihi res et defensio rerum | unis erat Felix placato numine Christi, | semper et avertens adversa et prospere praestans. | tu Felix semper felix mihi, ne miser essem, | perpetua pater et custos pietate fuisti. | cumque laborarem germani sanguine caesi | et consanguineum pareret fraterna periculum | causa mihi cenumque meum iam sector adisset, | tu mea colla, pater, gladio, patrimonia fisco | eximis et Christo domino mea meque reservas. [...] docuit rerum post exitus ingens | quo mutata mea sors et sententia vitae | abiurante fide mundum patriamque domumque, | prodita diversis egit commercia terris | portandamque crucem distractis omnibus emit.'

¹²⁸ On these developments, see Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 53–103.

¹²⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 471–73, CSEL, 30, p. 173: 'mihi Felix | ipse dei dono domus est, in quo mea vivam | vita domum nullis lapsuram possidet annis'.

¹³⁰ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 557–58, CSEL, 30, p. 176: 'tu, pater, et tua nobis | viscera prae bueris'.

¹³¹ Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, p. 852.

with the tomb proper at the bottom, had suddenly begun emitting dust and debris as well. Fear that the tomb had somehow been compromised by small animals led to its respectful uncovering and inspection. To everyone's huge relief and joy, it turned out to be intact, and was covered again. A visible event is once more interpreted as revealing an invisible one.

The last story in this poem concerns the shrine's need for water to feed its decorative fountains; the city of Nola, itself short of water, had denied Paulinus's request. The poet confesses that, while the new buildings were going up around Felix's tomb, he had 'kept reproaching my Felix with complaining words for seeming to be slow to attend to these prayers'.¹³² In fact, he then admits, his haste had been ill considered, and it was better that the water supply be taken care of when the building operations were completed. Characteristically, a lengthy praise and conflation of God as the Fount of Life and of Christ as the Rock from which a living spring came now informs the rest of the poem: Paulinus needs to envision the invisible spiritual reality in every analogous event. The small town of Abella, high up the mountains, is then praised for undertaking — as Paulinus specifies, in Felix's honour — to restore the dysfunctional aqueduct leading to Nola.¹³³ What provided proof that this was a divine gift, Paulinus adds, is that more water flowed there in the summer months than previously used to come after the storms of winter. Again, a possible coincidence is identified as a miracle. After this, however, the city of Nola is served with a brief reproach. The poet declaims:

Here I shall now lawfully declare you guilty, my Nola, before our common patron. With the anger of kindly love and a peaceful mind I shall impersonate our patron's ire, rebuking a young daughter with the substance of an old complaint. [...] Having forgotten God's rights, you thought that my request [concerned] human needs and, forgetting Felix, that it [concerned something that] would be given to me; as you complained, you believed that if you granted it, your territory would soon be dry and drained of water. For this was what you often shouted, even raising a riot. You did not know that springs would be available by God's help, as you have now experienced.¹³⁴

¹³² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 655–57, CSEL, 30, p. 179: 'querula iam voce solebam | Felicem incusare meum, quasi segniter istis | instaret votis'.

¹³³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 751, CSEL, 30, p. 182.

¹³⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 754–57, 760–67, CSEL, 30, p. 183: 'hic ego te modo iure ream, mea Nola, patrono | communi statuiam et blandae pietatis ab ira | mente manens placida motum simulabo patronum, | filiolum increpitans veteris sub voce querelae. [...] divinaque iura | respicere oblita humanis mea vota putabas | usibus et mihi te, Felicem oblita, daturam | credebas ac, si tribuisses, mox tibi siccam | subductu patriam potu fore maesta gemebas | idque etiam moto clamabas saepe tumultu, | nescia divinis opibus promptos fore fontes, | sicut et experta es.'

Paulinus's confident, explicit impersonation of the saint is remarkable. While Abella is then praised, Nola is told that now, no longer having her own resources, she enjoys the waters of Felix, for she has been enriched by Felix's effort and 'through God's help endowed with large streams'.¹³⁵ Her new lush appearance is thus also due to the saint — Paulinus is evidently not planning to let the city ever forget this dependence. These are not the only fountains she has been given, however; Felix has also brought to the city 'fountains that flow to your walls from heaven'.¹³⁶ These 'fountains' are the ascetic aristocrats Pinian and Melania, with her mother Albina, now 'nat[i] Felicis' (the children of Felix),¹³⁷ temporarily residing at the shrine. The poem ends with a prayer to Christ to 'influe pectoribus semper tibi, Christe, dicatis' (flow into the hearts of those dedicated to you).¹³⁸ It concludes: 'may Felix himself, our fount, [draw] from your Fount, and water us so generously that your spring, O Christ, our King, may always well up in us'.¹³⁹ Feeling unable to access Christ's fountain of living water, and thus salvation, by his own efforts, Paulinus evidently trusts Felix's love to do this for him and encourages his listeners to do the same. The now flowing water in the restored aqueduct — attributed to the saint — makes this visible, as it were. The visible world thus manifests invisible divine dynamics — divine 'laws' — to those who know how to look for and recognize them. For Paulinus, the templates are the images in the Bible.

'His Shining Face': Seeing Christ in the Saint

Sulpicius had met and seen the living Martin face to face. To remind him of his beloved teacher's presence, he had his image painted in his private chapel, together with that of Paulinus — against the latter's strenuous protest.¹⁴⁰ Did Paulinus ever visualize his Felix? Oddly, among the many other pictures which Paulinus mentions as having been put up in his shrine for the saint, there is no mention of a

¹³⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 812, CSEL, 30, p. 184; XXI. 814, CSEL, 30, p. 184; XXI. 815, CSEL, 30, p. 185: 'ex ope divina largis ditata fluentis'.

¹³⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 833–34, CSEL, 30, p. 185: 'caelifluos etiam fontes huc ad tua duxit | moenia'.

¹³⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 841, CSEL, 30, p. 185.

¹³⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 851, CSEL, 30, p. 186.

¹³⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXI. 854–56, CSEL, 30, p. 186: 'ipse | fons a fonte tuo Felix nos largus inundet, | semper ut in nobis saliat, rex Christe, tuus fons'.

¹⁴⁰ On this and the contextual ideas involved, see de Nie, 'Images of Invisible Dynamics'.

picture of him; perhaps to avoid suspicion of idolatry, he says explicitly that the tomb mediates Felix's 'presence'.¹⁴¹ He reports, however, that the possessed cried out that they saw 'Christum in sancto fulgere' (Christ shining forth in the saint).¹⁴² Elsewhere, Paulinus says that 'Felix is the glory of Christ who knows no limits',¹⁴³ and that Felix, like the sun, 'shines with Christ's illumination'.¹⁴⁴ This appears to develop the apostle Paul's statement that God 'shines in our hearts the enlightening knowledge of the glory of God in Christ Jesus's face'.¹⁴⁵ This radiance, then, functions as an 'image' of God.

It is when Paulinus describes how he imagines Felix to have been during his life that, alongside a characterization that resembles Sulpicius's of Martin as 'a man filled with God',¹⁴⁶ he also images the saint's face:

with his soul wholly among the stars, aware of Christ and forgetful of the world, he bore God in his heart and his bosom was filled with Christ. He was never confined to himself, and seemed [a] holy and greater [being], with his eyes and his face shining forth with a starry honour.¹⁴⁷

The image, of course, resembles that of the risen Christ in Revelation:

like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle around his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were glowing like brass in an oven, [...] and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.¹⁴⁸

Late antique literary descriptions of heavenly persons, not only of Christ, tend to point towards this image: it is the visible archetype of the heavenly soul.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴¹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVII. 440–48, CSEL, 30, pp. 281–82.

¹⁴² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XIII. 30–31, CSEL, 30, p. 47.

¹⁴³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XIII. 43, CSEL, 30, p. 47: 'immensi Felix est gloria Christi'.

¹⁴⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XXVII. 16, CSEL, 30, p. 262: 'inlustrante micat Christo'.

¹⁴⁵ II Corinthians 4. 6: 'inluxit in cordibus nostris ad inlustrationem scientiae claritatis Dei in facie Christi Jesu'.

¹⁴⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 1, SC, 133, p. 256.

¹⁴⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XV. 173–76, CSEL, 30, pp. 58–59: 'totus in astra nimo, Christi memor, immemor aevi, | corde deum gestans et plenus pectora Christo. | nec se capit ipse, sacer maiorque videri | sidereumque oculis et honorem fulgere vultu'.

¹⁴⁸ Revelation 1. 13–16 (Vulgate): 'similem Filio hominis, vestitum podere et praecinctum ad mamillas zonam auream; caput autem eius et capilli erant candidi tamquam lana, alba tamquam nix; et oculi eius velut flamma ignis, et pedes eius similes orichalco sicut in camino ardenti [...] et facies eius sicut sol lucet in virtute sua'.

¹⁴⁹ Cizek, 'Bild der idealen Schönheit'.

Something like this image returns in Paulinus's forty-ninth letter.¹⁵⁰ In it he presents an uneducated old man as having had the privilege of seeing an apparition of the saint in a moment of crisis that entailed a state of exhaustion, dehydration, and near-starvation likely to have induced an altered state of consciousness. As Paulinus tells it, the sailor Valgius was left alone, sleeping from exhaustion, on a storm-tossed rudderless ship that had lost the rest of its crew. Awoken when Christ gently stroked him and tweaked his ear, Valgius then saw him. For Paulinus writes that 'Christ entered the ship by means of this image of his confessor',¹⁵¹ apparently implying with this that, in this apparition at least, an image or resemblance coincides with the actual presence of the original. He tells us:

at its rudder was the Helmsman of the universe. Yes, the Lord himself sat at the stern, shining now with his own face and gleaming hair, as described in the Apocalypse, now with the face of his friend and confessor, my lord and our common patron, the venerable Felix.¹⁵²

The old man's faith in Christ's and the saint's aid are here seen to lead either to a waking dream or to a clairvoyant vision that actually 'sees' them as present in physical form — the former as described in Revelation, and the latter presumably as visualized from stories heard about him. In this period, there was nothing inherently improbable about apparitions: their occurrence was accepted as a possible manifestation of the autonomous and active reality of the spiritual world.¹⁵³ A vision like this one may have been a becoming aware of intensely experienced actual energy patterns, in oneself or in one's surroundings, through the specific images — the 'dream' — provided by one's world view.

After a lengthy interpretation of Valgius's experience on the ship as an analogy or allegory of God's dealing with the Ark of the Church on the sea of the world, Paulinus enjoins what is probably a meditation on these images: 'so let us keep before our minds and inwardly look on that most noble vision of God's work'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ An earlier version of this part of the chapter was published in my 'Paulinus of Nola and the Image Within the Image', pp. 282–84.

¹⁵¹ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 49. 10, CSEL, 29, p. 398, lines 19–20: 'hanc per imaginem confessoris sui Christus accessit'.

¹⁵² Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 49. 3, CSEL, 29, p. 392, line 26 – p. 393, line 1: 'cui gubernaculum erat mundi gubernator. ipse enim dominus nunc suo vultu coruscus, ut in Apocalypsi describitur, et coma fulgidus, nunc confessoris et amici sui, domini mei, communis patroni Felicis ore venerabilis in puppi sedebat.'

¹⁵³ See Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, pp. 102–67, and cf. Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*.

¹⁵⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 49. 10, CSEL, 29, p. 398, lines 5–6: 'proponamus ergo nobis animo et mente cernamus pulcherrimum divini operis spectaculum'.

For in these events, he writes, these 'mystica argumenta formantur' (mystical patterns are being given a visible form).¹⁵⁵ Again, then, the dynamics of God's invisible works are apprehended in those of patterns or 'images' that are visible or apprehensible in material phenomena.

Characteristically, Paulinus then gives us his recipe for a re-enacting of Valgius's experience. Comparing the latter's body to the material places and objects in the Holy Land, he writes:

if living proofs in lifeless objects demonstrate the ancient truth for today's belief, then with what reverence must this man be regarded, with whom God deigned to converse, before whom God's face was not concealed, to whom Christ revealed now his martyr and now his own person? Valgius is the living earth on which we see impressed the traces of the Lord's body, if with the eye of faith and spiritual sight we scrutinize what Christ's bosom and Christ's hands have touched in him.¹⁵⁶

Significantly, the recommended visualizing process upon the poor sailor is here described as 'scrutiny' or a kind of (close) reading (*perlegamus*) with the eye of faith and spiritual sight — a meditative 'reading' that is an enactment of remembered images, not words. For Paulinus, then, meditation upon the images of Valgius's vision is to lead to an interior seeing of Christ — not the saint. Ten or fifteen years later we shall see a more human saint's face emerge in the dreams and visions of ordinary Uzalian citizens.

At the very end of the letter, however, it turns out that Paulinus, with this story and with his offer of the old sailor as a gift (!), has been attempting to persuade the Roman official to whom it was addressed to return the ship's contents, stranded on his property, to its rightful owner. This ulterior purpose makes Paulinus's elaborate and detailed description unfortunately look more like at least in part a product of his own wishful imagination, embellished in the service of exerting influence, than — as presented — the sailor's actual experience.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 49. 11, CSEL, 29, p. 399, line 18.

¹⁵⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 49. 14, CSEL, 29, p. 402, line 28 – p. 403, line 4: 'si [...] veterem veritatem praesenti fide conprobant in rebus, exanimis viva documenta: quam religiose adspiciendus est hic, quem adloqui dei sermo dignatus est, cui se facies divina non texit, cui nunc martyrem suum, nunc semet ipsum Christus ostendit, in cuius vivente terra dominici corporis videmus inpressa vestigia, si fidelibus oculis et acie spiritali quod in eo sinus Christi, quod manus contigit perlegamus'.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, pp. 188–92.

God's Poetry?

The *Natalicia* want to show those who attended Felix's feasts how to venerate, trust, and approach their patron and how, through him, to approach God. At the same time, they substantiate and delineate Paulinus's belief in his own status as the saint's special protégé and representative. A letter from Augustine after Paulinus had become bishop shows that, no doubt under his direction, swearing an oath on Felix's tomb (which, if mendacious, was believed to be instantly punished) was then being used as a means to determine guilt or innocence in a dispute.¹⁵⁸ It would have been most enlightening to know more about the development of Nola's cult of Felix under Paulinus after 408 until his death one year after Augustine, in 431.

As we saw, however, Paulinus fervently wished to understand events in the visible world, whether recognized as a miracle or not, as embodied manifestations of divinely initiated dynamic patterns — or 'laws' — which had been anticipated in the Bible's events and described in its images. Now that Christ's Judgement was more imminent, he believed, these dynamics tended to be channelled through the holy martyrs. In the poems for his beloved Felix, Paulinus presents the saint's miracles through conflating Christian images with ones that echoed the entrancing beauty of classical poetry, which had always inspired him — as though miracles, or in fact all of spiritual reality, were God's poetry. Except perhaps in Valgius's case, he does not describe anything that seems to be a real, spontaneous vision; the images he 'almost' sees arise in his imagination, and he chooses to lay them over the concurrent sensory apprehensions — perhaps believing that this image too is indeed 'a holier perception', 'a divine apprehension'.

And there may be still another dimension. In a prose letter to the same Jovius mentioned earlier, and written in the same period as the poem about Theridius, Paulinus writes:

When you direct your mind's eye towards the heavenly sanctuary, Truth will reveal her face to you and this will disclose to you your own self; for it is through the knowing of divine truth that we also come to know ourselves.¹⁵⁹

What Paulinus appears to be saying here is that an image such as the Hand of God, for instance, is one that *reveals not only a divine dynamic pattern in the visible and*

¹⁵⁸ Augustine, *Epist.* 78, CSEL, 34. 2, pp. 331–45.

¹⁵⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 16. 9, CSEL 29, p. 123, lines 2–5: 'ilico ut ad superna penetralia aciem mentis intenderis, aperiet ad te faciem suam veritas teque ipsum reserabit tibi. nam divinae veritatis agnitu, id quoque, ut nosmet ipsos noverimus, adsequimur'. Cf. Erdt, *Christentum und heidnisch-antike Bildung bei Paulin von Nola*, pp. 218–22.

invisible world, but also a dynamically analogous, non-visual, non-verbal spiritual pattern at work in the mind and heart. Perhaps this is why the heart is able to recognize it at all.¹⁶⁰ As is well known, more than a decade after this poem, Augustine wrote a major work on recognizing the dynamic image-pattern of the holy Trinity not only in the text of the Bible but also in the human heart and mind.¹⁶¹

In his birthday poems for Felix, and especially in the poem about Theridius, then, Paulinus will have believed that he achieved something close to the 'divine poetry' that he himself must also have aimed at. His descriptions and images transform the landscape and the events into images of the workings of the invisible divine patterns that are central in the Bible. When listened to in a meditative mode, these images would have been mentally reproduced and thereby affectively replicated. The listener would thus achieve an experiential apprehension of something like a reflection of one of the divine dynamic powers and patterns underlying, creating, and sustaining the visible world. An envisioned divine pattern in a miracle, then, might even reveal an aspect of one's own innate reflection of the image of God. Paulinus's imaginative explorations are an elaborate demonstration not only of Jung's synchronistic or 'psycho-physical' events, and possibly Drewermann's innate patterns, but also of Barth's 'divination *and* poetry'.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, II. 1. 1, lines 1–2, CCSL, 143, p. 59: 'Scriptura sacramentis oculis quasi quoddam speculum opponitur, ut interna nostra facies in ipsa videatur' ('Sacred Scripture as it were holds up a kind of mirror to the mind's eyes, so that our interior face might be seen in it'). Cited and discussed in Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, pp. 159–60.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV. 3. 6, lines 62–64, CCSL, 50A, p. 428: 'ea est invenienda in anima hominis, id est rationali, sive intellectuali, imago Creatoris, quae immortaliter immortalitati eius est insita' ('What we have to find in the soul of man, that is in the rational and intellectual soul, is an image of the Creator which is immortally engrained in the soul's immortality'; trans. by Hill, in Augustine, *The Trinity*, p. 374).



Figure 4. 'Christ healing a blind man', ivory pyxis, Cleveland, Museum of Art.
Sixth century. Copyright Geneva Kornbluth.

‘HEALING THE EYES OF THE HEART’: AUGUSTINE’S VIEWS ON MIRACLES UP TO C. 424

Of all the authors discussed in this study, Bishop Augustine of Hippo (354–430) has the most to say about miracles, ancient as well as contemporary, and he is the only one who attempted to explore their metaphysics. What makes his writings especially revealing, however, is the evidence that can be traced in them of the process from an early categorical denial of contemporary miracles to their later full acceptance. His ‘conversion to contemporary miracles’, as it were — as far as I know the only such documentation in the Christian context surviving from this period¹ — sheds light on how one’s personal disposition and world view, as well as external pressures, could then play a role in the rejection and acceptance of the mysterious events that introduced a new experience.

Probably because he has so much else to offer, there has been relatively little scholarly discussion about his views on miracles. As I shall argue, the evidence seems to point to his visit to Uzalis in 424 as the moment of his final change of mind. Although he nowhere reveals how he came by his own relic of Stephen, it may be that the stories he was told there about the first martyr’s miracles resulted in his asking for and being given a (contact) relic of the martyr to take back with him to Hippo — where it then precipitated a tidal wave of miracles. To be able to follow his change of mind in its chronological order, and to have some ideas of the specific stories that may have occasioned it, I have therefore chosen to treat his

I am grateful to Karl F. Morrison, Catherine Conybeare, and Paul van Geest for their comments upon an earlier version of this chapter.

¹ Cf. Nock, *Conversion*, pp. 254–71. Parts of this chapter have been published in de Nie, ‘*Tangere autem corde, hoc est credere*’.

early ideas about miracles in Chapter 4, to analyse the Uzalis stories in Chapter 5, and then to treat Augustine's views on the new martyrs' miracles in Chapter 6.

The mental distance Augustine eventually traversed is evident in two quotations: one in 389/91 and the other in 427. In his *On True Religion*, addressed to his former patron Romanianus, then an adherent of Manicheism, he says about the incarnated Wisdom of God, Jesus Christ, that 'through miracles he brought about faith in him as the God that he was'.² We should therefore accept, Augustine says, that our ancestors

followed visible miracles as the way through which one ascends from temporal things to eternal ones because they were not able to [get there] otherwise, and through them it was effected that these [miracles] would no longer be necessary for their descendants. Thus, now that the Catholic Church is spread out and well established throughout the world, miracles are not allowed to continue into our times, lest the soul should always seek visible things and lest the human race should become indifferent [to them] through the customary occurrence [of events] whose novelty had once set them aglow.³

This treatise was written when — recently baptized — he was living in religious retreat in his home town of Thagaste. He adjusted it in the following passage, written in 427, after a tidal wave of miracles had swept over in his own episcopal city of Hippo following the arrival of a relic of the first martyr Stephen in 424; it appears in one of his last works, the *Reconsiderations*, in which he wished to correct or emend any misleading statements in his many writings:

this statement of mine is indeed true: 'miracles were not allowed to last until our times lest the soul should seek only visible things and lest the human race should become indifferent [to them] through the customary occurrence [of events] whose novelty had once set them aglow'.⁴ For not even now, when a hand is laid on the baptized, do they receive the Holy Spirit in such a way that they speak with the tongues of all nations [Acts 2. 4, 10. 45–46]; nor are the sick now healed by the passing shadow of the preachers of Christ [Acts 5. 15]. Even though such things happened at that [apostolic] time, manifestly they ceased later. But what I said is not to be so interpreted that no miracles are believed to be performed in the name of Christ in the present time. For, when I wrote the book, I myself had already

² Augustine, *Vera relig.*, XVI. 31, line 20, CCSL, 32, p. 206: 'miraculis conciliavit fidem deo qui erat'. On the date, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 74. See also the introduction to the edition and German translation by Lössl, p. 8.

³ Augustine, *Vera relig.*, XXV. 47, lines 25–31, CCSL, 32, pp. 216–17: 'eo gradu, quo a temporalibus ad aeterna conscenditur, visibilia miracula — non enim aliter poterant — secutos esse, per quos id actum est, ut necessaria non essent posteris. Cum enim ecclesia catholica per totum orbem diffusa atque fundata sit, nec miracula illa in nostra tempora durare permissa sunt, ne anima semper visibilia quaereret et eorum consuetudine frigeresceret genus humanum, quorum novitate flagravat.'

⁴ See previous note.

learned about the blind man having been restored to sight in Milan near the bodies of the martyrs of that very city, and about some other [miracles], of which so many were happening even in those times, that we cannot know about all of them nor count those which we do know.⁵

We see him confessing here to having at that time recently 'learned about' (significantly not 'seen') the events in Milan, and to having heard about a few others, and yet having omitted mention and consideration of them. Why? The last part of the sentence — in which his former statement is now, in hindsight, presented as an incomplete formulation — may indicate that one reason for this was that he was then not aware of the number of miracles happening outside his purview and consequently did not realize the importance of the new phenomenon. As will be seen, he would repeat his view about the cessation of miracles in other writings for at least another six years. What had then been the evidently strong reservations that prevented him from publicly acknowledging not only the events in Milan but also a miraculous cure in a private home which, as will be seen, he himself had just personally witnessed in 387? This chapter will look at the reasons he gives for his long-held negative view of contemporary miracles, especially in Africa, and then consider some main points in his simultaneous positive metaphysical and theological considerations of biblical miracles.

First, however, a brief look at his life will provide the context for his ideas.⁶ Born in 354 in the small town of Thagaste in central Numidia, now Souk Ahras in eastern Algeria, he was the son of a pagan father and a fervently Christian mother, Monica. Realizing his potential, the family scraped and saved, and was later helped by a wealthy benefactor, Romanianus, to send him to school in Madaura and then to Carthage for a rhetorical education, where he later also taught. Having up to then

⁵ Augustine, *Retractationes*, I. 13. 7, lines 89–102, CCL, 57, p. 39: 'Item quod dixi: "Nec miracula illa in nostra tempora durare permissa sunt, ne anima semper visibilia quereret, et eorum consuetudine frigesceret genus humanum, quorum novitate flagravat", verum est quidem; non enim nunc usque, cum manus inponitur baptizatis, sic accipiunt spiritum sanctum, ut loquantur linguis omnium gentium, aut nunc usque ad umbram transeuntium praedicatorum Christi sanantur infirmi, et si qua talia tunc facta sunt, quae postea cessasse manifestum est. Sed non sic accipiendum est quod dixi, ut nunc in Christi nomine fieri miracula nulla credantur. Nam ego ipse, quando istum ipsum scripsi librum, ad Mediolanensium corpora martyrum in eadem civitate caecum illuminatum fuisse iam noveram et alia nonnulla, qualia tam multa etiam istis temporibus fiunt, ut nec omnia cognoscere nec ea quae cognoscimus enumerare possimus.'

⁶ From the immeasurable amount of literature on Augustine I have chosen a few works that are accessible to the general reader and give information about the subject at hand; their bibliographies will point the way to more specialized investigations. On Augustine's life, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*; Lancel, *Saint Augustine*; and O'Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner and Saint*.

been put off from exploring the Bible by its unclassical language, he became interested in the dualist sect of the Manichees and, much to his mother's dismay, for nine years attended their lectures. After 373, however, he turned to philosophy to find an answer to his burning questions about the nature of truth. Wishing to expand his horizons, he left for Rome in 383 without telling his mother and, possibly through the intervention of Romanianus, acquired and held a teaching post there until 384, when he was appointed professor of rhetoric in Milan.

There, he was introduced to the more otherworldly Neoplatonic philosophy whose quest for Wisdom, as his writings show, seemed to him to come very close to that of the apostle Paul's Christianity.⁷ Ambrose's sermons, however, opened his eyes to the allegorical explanation of the Old Testament as pointing to hidden divine mysteries and Wisdom, and as he tells it in his *Confessions* it was this that led to his conversion in 386.⁸ Having given up his teaching post as rhetor because of a respiratory illness, he retired with some friends to a benefactor's country estate, Cassiciacum, to ponder and discuss his new insights and put them into writing. His mother, who had hoped and prayed for years for his conversion to Christianity and had followed him to Milan in 385, joined him there. His baptism by Ambrose took place in early 387, and his mother died later that year in Ostia on their way back to Africa. In 388 he returned to Thagaste and lived there with friends in a quasi-monastic retreat, writing more treatises. However, in 391 during a visit to Hippo Regius, a small coastal town in Numidia (now Annaba in eastern Algeria), the city's Greek-speaking bishop unexpectedly invited his community to press him — by now well known for his rhetorical ability — to accept ordination as a priest in order to preach there, an unprecedented and highly controversial move. It was a decisive change in his life; he is said to have wept upon the occasion.

From now on he had to deal with the concerns of the African church, which was internally divided. For beside the Catholic hierarchy there was another one that had originated in 311, when those who had not given up their Christian books to be burned during the last persecution refused to recognize the ordinations of those who had done so. They set up their own hierarchy, later led by their own Bishop of Carthage, Donatus, from whom they took their name, regarding it as the only authentic one, and cultivated their own martyrs, visions, and miracles.⁹ In 391

⁷ See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. 101–14, and Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, pp. 117–32. Cf. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, pp. 159–86.

⁸ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. 158–81; Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, pp. 290–312. Cf. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*.

⁹ On the history of the Donatists, see Frend, *The Donatist Church*.

the Donatist party in Africa was larger than that of the Catholics, especially in the province of Numidia in which Hippo was situated. Augustine was consecrated as the Catholic bishop of the city in 395 and carried out his duties until his death in 430 during the city's siege by the Vandals who were then taking over all of north Africa. We can only be extremely grateful that the many writings which he managed to produce during his inordinately strenuous life as bishop were preserved by what itself appears to be a miracle. For when the deserted city, after a fourteen-month siege, was burned down by the invaders, these writings had been taken away and somehow reached Rome before 450¹⁰ to be kept there as an enduring inestimable — if not uncontroversial — legacy to Christian thinking in later centuries.

'Figments of Human Lies or Portents of Deceiving Spirits'? Views about Contemporary Miracles up to 422/24

In 1938 and 1939, D. P. de Vooght analysed Augustine's views on miracles in three articles that became the fundament of later discussions: one each on his philosophical concept of miracle, their role in his personal life, and his theology of them.¹¹ Contrasting Augustine's views in the early 390s with those in 426, the author argues that while his philosophical view of miracles remained the same, it was Augustine's personal experience of those at the end of his life that changed his mental attitude towards contemporary ones and thereby also somewhat modified his ideas about their present theological purpose. Thus from his early view that visible miracles had ceased because they were no longer necessary for conversion, and that — seeing their prominence among the in his view 'heretical' Donatists — they were not proofs of true religion and also ought not to be sought by the good Christian, Augustine later suddenly came to the opposite one. In the last book of his *City of God*, he regarded all those occurring within the now united Catholic Church as visible and edifying evidence of Christ's and the saints' resurrection in heaven. Alongside his concern there with showing proof of the promised future resurrection of the flesh for everyone — with his own advancing age also especially relevant for himself — the easily overlooked fact (not mentioned by de Vooght) that, notwithstanding well-broadcasted Christian triumphalism, unconvinced non-Christians then still constituted the majority of the population¹² is likely to have been a contributing reason for such an emphasis.

¹⁰ Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, pp. 667–68.

¹¹ De Vooght, 'Notion philosophique', 'Miracles', and 'Théologie du miracle'.

¹² Brown, 'Christianization and Religious Conflict', p. 632.

Several later publications have refined de Vooght's presentation of Augustine's two starkly opposed views by introducing a timeline showing a certain development from the one view to the other. Thus Pierre Courcelle, in his study of the *Confessions* (1968), pointed to evidence of intermediate stages. He noted that, after having omitted mention of the miracles at Milan in their chronological order in the story of his conversion, Augustine first, incidentally and retrospectively, 'remembers' them only in book nine and from then on until about 425 admits to some contemporary miracles, albeit only outside Africa.¹³ His continuing reservations are attributed to his philosophical culture and rationalism and his opposition to the Donatists' vaunting of their miracles, as well as to the relative scarcity of Catholic miracles in the period before 415.¹⁴ In 1980, Victor Saxer analysed the miracles Augustine recounted in the last book of his *City of God* in their full situational context of the African cult of martyrs, especially that in Uzalis.¹⁵ More recently, in his study *Miracle comme 'argumentum fidei' chez saint Augustin* (2002), Leopold Tanganagba, although focused upon theological considerations, further refines the timeline indicated by Courcelle by pointing to three distinct periods in what he regards as Augustine's expanding, rather than change of, view about contemporary miracles.¹⁶ Finally, Serge Lancel's article in 2006 on Augustine and miracles notes that no new information on this subject has been found in the Church Father's recently discovered writings and that very little attention has been given to the subject since de Vooght's articles; he also notes that the Bishop's reservations about miracles were out of tune with what looks like a great yearning for these in his community, especially since miracle-loving former Donatists had joined it after their reconciliation with the Catholics in 411.¹⁷

'Now Blind Flesh Does Not Open its Eyes Through a Miracle of the Lord': Denial (386–97/400)

Until 397/400 — the date of his *Confessions* is disputed — as he himself then admits, Augustine somehow 'forgot' about the miracle that had happened in Milan while he was in the city.¹⁸ Thus a statement about miracles similar to that in *On True Religion* appears in his *On the Usefulness of Believing*, written in 392 as one of

¹³ Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, pp. 139–40.

¹⁴ Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 145.

¹⁵ Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, esp. pp. 254–78.

¹⁶ Tanganagba, *Miracle comme 'argumentum fidei'*.

¹⁷ Lancel, 'Saint Augustin et le miracle'.

¹⁸ Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, pp. 139–40.

his first works as a priest in Hippo and addressed to a friend who had become a Manichee. In what he says near the beginning about this sect's holding that reason can decide everything and thus being alarmed by what they regarded as 'superstition',¹⁹ we can infer that Augustine, in his Manichean period, is likely to have thought likewise about his mother's religion. Now, however, he defends the believing of things we cannot comprehend, since that happens outside religion too:

I not only judge it most healthful to believe before reason, when you are not qualified to receive reason, and by the very act of faith thoroughly to cultivate the mind to receive the seeds of truth, especially a thing of such a sort that without it health cannot return to sick souls.²⁰

Thus Christ's miracles were done in order that his message should then be believed in; they convinced through their eyes men whose minds needed to be purified in this way by the love of God.²¹ We shall see that this last purpose was to remain central in Augustine's theology of miracles. What, however, is a miracle? Augustine writes:

I call that a miracle, whatever appears that is difficult or unusual above the hope of power of them who wonder. Of which kind there is nothing more suited for the people, and in general for foolish men, than what is brought near the senses.²²

Sensory perception, then, even of a miracle, is still an inferior road to true knowledge. Something more is needed.

His next statement, however, encourages the cultivation of an intense observation of the natural world to discern God at work in its inherent invisible dynamics — developing a thought already expressed by the apostle Paul in Romans 1. 20. Although Augustine does not say so here, as will become evident in this chapter, an important key to his valuing sensory experience²³ appears to have been his intention to 'read', that is, interpret and understand, the visible dynamics in these phenomena as manifestations of invisible divine workings — workings that would

¹⁹ Augustine, *De util. cred.*, 2, CSEL, 25, pp. 4–5, lines 3–48.

²⁰ Augustine, *De util. cred.*, 31, CSEL, 25, p. 38, lines 13–17: 'nam ego credere ante rationem, cum percipiendae rationi non sis idoneus, et ipsa fide animum excolere excipendis seminibus veritatis non solum saluberrimum iudico, sed tale omnino, sine quo aegris animis salus redire non possit'.

²¹ Augustine, *De util. cred.*, 32, 33, CSEL, 25, pp. 40–42.

²² Augustine, *De util. cred.*, 34, CSEL, 25, p. 43, lines 16–19: 'miraculum voco quicquid arduum aut insolitum supra spem vel facultatem mirantis adparet. In quo genere nihil est populis aptius et omnino stultis hominibus quam id, quod sensibus admovetur'.

²³ Pranger, 'Augustine and the Return of the Senses', discusses this problem in Augustine and notes an increased appreciation of the senses in his later years. Miles, *Augustine on the Body*, pp. 9–39, notes the same with different evidence.

open the heart to recognize similar and further invisible dynamics everywhere. This is the true purpose of the early Christian miracles:

You ask: why do those things [i.e. miracles] not happen now? Because they would not move us, unless they were wonderful, and, if they were usual, they would not be wonderful. Take the alternation of day and night and the ever constant order of the celestial bodies, the yearly turning into the four seasons, the falling off and return of leaves on the trees, the boundless power of seeds, the beauty of light, the varieties of colours, sounds, tastes, and scents [of nature], and let someone with whom we can speak see and perceive them for the first time: he will be stunned and overwhelmed by [these] miracles. We, however, pay no attention to all these, not because they are easy to understand (for what is more obscure than their causes?) but surely because they meet our senses all the time. Therefore [Christ's miracles] were done at a suitable time, in order that, a multitude of believers having been gathered together and grown in size by them, [their] useful authority might change these people's way of life.²⁴

In his *Reconsiderations* Augustine qualifies this early statement about the cessation of miracles too: 'I said this, however, meaning that now such great and numerous ones do not take place, not that none are now still occurring.'²⁵ This statement makes a subtle mid-sentence shift between his meaning in the past and that in the present. Subsequent similar denials in the early period contradict this later adjustment as applying to the early writings; Augustine's careful formulation appears to indicate that he was aware of this. As already indicated, lack of knowledge about these other miracles may have been one reason for his initial reserve.

For his sermon 88 on Christ's healing of the two blind men, held around 400,²⁶ also clearly denies that miracles take place in his time,²⁷ while at the same time

²⁴ Augustine, *De util. cred.*, 34, CSEL 25, p. 43, lines 7–19: 'Cur, inquis, ista modo non fiunt? quia non moverent, nisi mira essent; at si solita essent, mira non essent. nam diei et noctis vices et constantissimum ordinem rerum caelestium, annorum quadrifariam conversionem, decedentes redeuntesque frondes arboribus, infinitam vim seminum, pulchritudinem lucis, colorum, sonorum, odorum saporumque varietates da qui primum videat atque sentiat, cum quo tamen loqui possimus, hebescit obruiturque miraculis; nos vero haec omnia non cognoscendi facilitate — quid enim causis horum obscurios? — sed certe sentiendi adsiduitate contemnimus. facta sunt igitur illa oportunissime, ut his multitudine credentium congregata atque propagata in ipsos mores utilis converteretur auctoritas.'

²⁵ Augustine, *Retractationes*, I. 13.7, lines 6–7, CCSL 57, p. 70: 'Hoc autem dixi, quia non tanta nec omnia modo, non quia nulla fiunt etiam modo.'

²⁶ Augustine, *Sermo* 88, PL, 38, cols 539B–553D; quotations will be from the new edition, 'Le Sermon LXXXVIII de saint Augustin', ed. and commentary by Verbraken, pp. 74–101. Dated in Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, p. 404, and in Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', p. 512.

²⁷ Cf. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 141.

reading atemporal meaning into these ancient ones: they are presented as models for contemporary interior conversion. Thus the sermon begins with the statement that everyone knows that Jesus Christ is the 'physician of our eternal health, in that he takes on the infirmity of our human nature lest our infirmity be eternal'.²⁸ This was done 'so that we might know that all the miracles which he did while in the body are useful for us as admonitions, so that we might learn from him that which is not transitory'.²⁹ Thus he gave the blind back their eyes which at some future time would certainly be closed, and he raised Lazarus, who would die again; 'but because those things which are not seen, are not believed, he built up faith in the things that are not seen through these temporal things which were seen'.³⁰ The absence of miracles in the present time should not cause distress, however:

Let no one therefore say, brothers, that our Lord Jesus Christ does not act in this way [today], and because of this prefer the former times of the Church to the present ones. For in another place the same Lord preferred those who did not see and yet believed to those who saw and believed.³¹

These things the Lord did so that he might invite faith. This faith now burns in the Church that is spread through the whole world. And now greater cures are performed, on account of which he does not deign to exhibit the lesser ones of former times. Just as the soul is better than the body, so the health of the soul is better than the health of the body. Today blind flesh does not open its eyes through a miracle of the Lord — but a blind heart opens its eyes through the words of the Lord. Today a dead corpse does not rise again — the soul, which had lain dead in a living body, rises again. Today, the ears of a deaf body are not opened — but how many have closed ears of the heart that [now] open by the penetration of the word of God so that those who did not believe may believe?³²

²⁸ Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 1, lines 3–5, ed. by Verbraken, p. 74: 'medicum esse nostrae salutis aeternae; et ad hoc eum suscepisse infirmitatem naturae nostrae, ne sempiterna esset infirmitas nostra'.

²⁹ Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 1, lines 11–13, ed. by Verbraken, p. 75: 'ut noverimus omnia miracula, quae corporaliter fecit, valere ad admonitionem nostram, ut percipiamus ab eo quod non est transiturum'.

³⁰ Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 1, lines 18–20, ed. by Verbraken, p. 75: 'sed quia illa quae non videbantur, non credebantur, per ista temporalia quae videbantur aedificabat fidem ad illa quae non videbantur'.

³¹ Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 2, lines 21–25, ed. by Verbraken, p. 75: 'Nemo itaque, fratres, dicat, non facere ista modo dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, et propter hoc praesentibus ecclesiae temporibus priora ponere. Quodam quippe loco idem dominus videntibus, et ideo credentibus, praeponit eos qui non vident, et credunt'.

³² Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 3, lines 44–54, ed. by Verbraken, p. 76: 'Haec ergo fecit Dominus, ut invitaret ad fidem. Haec fides nunc fervet in ecclesia, toto orbe diffusa. Et nunc maiores sanitates

The cure of Severus's blindness in Milan indeed seems completely forgotten here. Interior conversions are the kind of contemporary miracles which Augustine recognizes and strongly encourages, and he holds up the ancient miracles as performative models for these.

The sermon then goes on to say that the crowd that had tried to stop the two blind men from crying out to Christ are like the impious in the present Church who try to keep their pious counterparts from living their virtues and carrying out good works. The underlying, real, reason for Augustine's long description of seeking these *spiritual* cures, however, seems to appear when he urges: '[But] don't cry out to the Lord on the other side, don't go to the heretics and there cry out to the Lord!'³³ The rest of the sermon, accordingly, is about avoiding spiritual infection by Donatist ideas. It must have been difficult to do without miracles when, in the same city, the schismatic, in Augustine's eyes 'heretical', Donatists were actively seeking, and apparently experiencing, what they regarded as miracles. And the Catholics' envy of this necessitated a satisfying alternative. Alongside Augustine's own philosophical orientation in this early period, his wishing to discredit what, as will be seen, he regarded as the false Donatist miracles is therefore likely to have been a, if not the, decisive reason for denying that contemporary miracles happen at all. Did this public stance, however, accord with his private experience?

'In My Deepest [Self] your Signals Were Inserted': Personal Experiences

His *Confessions* was written in 397/401 in response to a request by Paulinus of Nola that had originally been addressed to Augustine's friend Alypius to describe his own conversion by Bishop Ambrose, who had also been instrumental in Paulinus's conversion. Alypius, feeling diffident about the project, passed the request along to Augustine.³⁴ As appears here, and many years later in book twenty-two of his *City of God* (426), Augustine himself had by then already experienced at least two events

operatur, propter quas non est dedignatus tunc exhibere illa minores. Sicut enim animus melior est corpore, sic est melior salus animi quam salus corporis. Modo caro caeca non aperit oculos miraculo dei, et cor caecum aperit et oculos sermone domini. Modo non resurgit mortale cadaver; resurgit anima, quae mortalis iacebat in vivo cadavere. Modo aures surdae corporis non aperiuntur; sed quam multi habent aures clausas cordis, quae tamen verbo dei penetrante patescunt, ut credant qui non credebant.'

³³ Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 17, lines 449–51, ed. by Verbraken, p. 91: 'Nolite per aliam partem clamare ad Dominum, nolite ad haereticos ire, et ibi clamare ad Dominum.'

³⁴ Courcelle, *Recherches*, pp. 29–32.

in this early period that can be characterized as miracles,³⁵ as well as an ecstatic experience whose description shows very clearly how his view of the relation between mental images and theophany differs from that of his poet correspondent.

In the *Confessions*, reminiscing about his stay at Cassiciacum with friends in 386, just after his conversion but before his baptism, he writes:

When shall I call to mind everything [that I did] in those days of rest? But I have not yet forgotten, nor will I be silent about, the smarting of your scourge and the wonderful swiftness of your compassion. For you then tormented me with a toothache, and when it grew to be so painful that I was not able to speak, it came into my heart to ask all my friends who were present to pray for me to you, the God of all kinds of health. And I wrote this on a waxed tablet, and gave it to them to read. Immediately, as soon as we bowed our knees in humble devotion, that pain fled. But what pain? Or how did it go away? I was severely frightened, my Lord and my God: nothing like it had I ever experienced from my infancy onwards. In my deepest [self] your signals were inserted, and rejoicing in faith, I praised your name. That faith [however] did not allow me to feel safe about my past sins, which had not yet been forgiven through baptism.³⁶

Although he clearly recognizes it as an act of God, Augustine does not use the word 'miracle' here; in his later writings, the motif that Christ is mankind's 'physician' recurs.³⁷ Augustine's biographer mentions that, as bishop, he later regarded it as his official duty to visit the sick upon their request to pray for them and lay his hand upon them, and that he exorcized demons upon request through prayer and tears.³⁸

³⁵ Lancel, 'Saint Augustin', p. 72, refers to the scene in the garden at Milan — Augustine's seeming to hear children cry 'Pick up and read (*Tolle, lege*)' and his finding himself looking at Romans 13. 13–14 (*Conf.* VIII. 12. 29, lines 19–20, CCSL, 27, p. 131) — as also a 'miracle', a view not adopted by Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 194.

³⁶ Augustine, *Conf.* IX. 4. 12, lines 99–111, CCSL, 27, p. 140: 'Quando recordabor omnia dierum illorum feriatarum? sed nec oblitus sum, nec silebo, flagelli tui asperitatem, et misericordiae tuae mirabilem celeritatem. dolore dentium tunc excruciabas me, et cum in tantum ingravesceret, ut non valerem loqui, ascendit in cor meum admonere omnes meos, qui aderant, ut deprecarentur te pro me, deum salutis omnimodae. et scripsi hoc in cera et dedi, ut eis legeretur. mox ut genua simplici affectu fiximus, fugit dolor ille. sed quis dolor? aut quomodo fugit? expavi, fateor, domine meus et deus meus: nihil enim tale ab ineunte aetate expertus fueram. et insinuati sunt mihi in profundo nutus tui, et gaudens in fide laudavi nomen tuum; et ea fides me securum esse non sinebat de praeteritis peccatis meis, quae mihi per baptismum tuum remissa nondum erant.'

³⁷ For an overview of the theme in Augustine, see Arbesmann, 'Concept of "Christus medicus" in St. Augustine'.

³⁸ Possidius of Calama (Possidius Calamensis), *Vita sancti Augustini*, XXVII. 2, lines 3–6, and XXIX. 4, lines 15–18, ed. by Bastiaensen, pp. 198 and 210, respectively. As will be seen, this combination of prayer with tears recurs in Augustine's description of contemporary miracles: Augustine,

As will be seen, in some of his later writings he refers in passing to what may have been this kind of healing in his own community as something that is more or less regularly happening and not particularly spectacular.³⁹ If, then, when speaking about ‘miracles’ in this early period he had only the more public ones in mind — such as those he later reports in the *City of God* as occurring during the sacraments and through martyrs’ relics and shrines — this is an important qualification to remember when interpreting his denial of the happening of contemporary ones in this early period.

At the time, and still in the *Confessions*, he appears to have regarded this incident as an interior healing process — consisting of divine signals (*nutus*) — to which his body responded. Although his request to his friends shows that he had known that praying over the sick was an ancient Christian practice,⁴⁰ he now appears deeply shaken by the fact that it actually achieved a result. This experience of God’s swift answering compassion, as he says, now became a determining part of his inner life.

He does not designate the well-known moment of ecstasy at Ostia as a miracle, but his description of it tells us how he regarded the images of imagination in relation to experiencing the divine: like Plotinus, he felt that he left them behind for a direct intuition through the superior non-iconic faculty of intelligence.⁴¹ As he wrote in a treatise of this period, the true vision of reality was that by the intellect, which ‘contains those things that do not have images resembling them’.⁴² The Ostia experience came forth out of a conversation with his mother about the saints’ heavenly non-sensory perception of God, but he nevertheless describes this speaking-while-projectively-imagining with metaphors of sense experience as:

we were panting after the heavenly flowing of your fount, the fount of life, which is in you, with the mouth of our heart; so that being moistened by it according to our capacity, we might somehow meditate upon so great a matter.⁴³

Sermo 322, PL, 38, col. 1444[C–D], and in Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII, 8, lines 294–95, CCSL, 48, p. 822.

³⁹ Augustine, *Contra litteras Petilianus* [hereafter *Contra lit. Petil.*], II. lv. 126, CSEL, 52, p. 91, lines 10–14.

⁴⁰ As we saw, the standard advice is given in James 5. 14–16.

⁴¹ Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, pp. 222–26, points to parallels with Plotinian ecstasy. Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, points to this view as the one that in the fourth century was superseded by the sensory ‘touch of the real’.

⁴² Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* [hereafter *De Gen.*], XII. 6, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 387, line 16: ‘quae non habent imagines sui similes’.

⁴³ Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 10. 23, lines 11–13, CCSL, 27, p. 147: ‘inhiabamus ore cordis in superna fluentia fontis tui, fontis vitae, qui est apud te; ut inde pro capto nostro aspersi, quoquo modo rem tantam cogitarem’.

And when they had reached the conclusion that the highest pleasure of the carnal senses were not worthy of comparison, even of mentioning, with regard to the joy of that life,

lifting ourselves up with an even more ardent feeling towards this Same, we [imaginatively] walked past all the degrees of corporeal things, including even the sky, from whence the sun and moon shine upon the earth. And ascending even higher from there, interiorly meditating upon and talking about and admiring your works, we came into our minds and transcended them, so that we might attain/touch the region of never-ending bountifulness [...] where life is the Wisdom through which everything is made [...] [that is] Being itself [...]. And while we talked and panted after it, we touched it lightly with a total shock/upheaval of the heart.⁴⁴

When he reiterates what has happened and wonders when it might happen again, he explicitly says that the 'tumultus carnis' (tumult of the flesh), 'phantasiae terrae et aquarum et aeris' (imagings of the earth and waters and heavens), and 'somnia et imaginariae revelationes' (all dreams and imaged revelations) should first all be silenced. This should happen 'ut audiamus verbum eius' (so that we may hear his word),

not by the sound of thunder, nor through the riddle of a likeness, but that we may hear him himself, whom we love in these things, we hear him without these things, just as we now reached out and with a leap of the mind touched/attained the eternal Wisdom remaining above all things.⁴⁵

And he calls it a supremely aniconic moment, an intuition of the intelligence: a 'momentum intellegentiae' (moment of understanding), when 'subtrahantur aliae visiones longe inparis generis' (all other visions of an extremely unequal kind have been taken away).⁴⁶ Augustine here describes this sudden leap from sensory to intelligible experience as a rare divine gift which cannot be humanly brought about or even initiated; it must simply be awaited in a state of constant attentive receptiveness to

⁴⁴ Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 10. 24, lines 17–22, 23–24, 26, 27–28, 41, CCSL, 27, p. 147: 'erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in id ipsum, perambulavimus gradatim cuncta corporalia, et ipsum caelum, unde sol et luna et stellae lucent super terram. et adhuc ascendebamus, interiorius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua, et venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis, [...] et ibi vita sapientia est, per quam fiunt omnia ista [...]. esse solum [...]. et dum loquimur et inhiamus illi, attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis.' Augustine elaborates his view of 'seeing' God in his *Epist.* 147 and 148, CSEL, 44, pp. 274–347.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 10. 25, lines 34, 35–36, 42–45, CCSL, 27, p. 148: 'nec per sonitum nubis nec per aenigma similitudinis, sed ipsum, quem in his amamus, ipsum sine his audiamus, sicut nunc extendimus nos et rapida cogitatione attingimus aeternam sapientiam super omnia manentem'.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 10. 44, lines 48–49 and IX. 10. 46, line 46, CCSL, 27, p. 148.

the present moment, because it is in this that time and eternity mutually embrace each other.⁴⁷ For him, then, visible things and images of them can only *tell about* the workings of the invisible divine; we shall see him letting them do this in his sermons about the Psalms and the fourth Gospel. Whereas Paulinus, like Plato, believed he could ‘conceive divine apprehensions’ of ‘God’s laws’ through images that emerged into his poetic consciousness, Augustine’s intuition of the Wisdom that is the Word — like Plotinus’s of the One — intentionally left imagination behind.

For what intellectual vision sees ‘non imaginaliter, sed proprie videtur’ (is seen not imaginatively but in its essence).⁴⁸ And whereas corporeal and spiritual — that is, imaginative — vision may deceive, intellectual vision is always veridical.⁴⁹ Of the visions in the Bible, he thus adjudged those who could (also) interpret the seen images as the real prophets, not the ones who had merely received the images; speaking of Pharaoh’s vision of the seven cows and Joseph’s interpretation of it, Augustine says: ‘the former’s spirit was informed so that he might see [the images], the latter’s mind was illumined so that he might understand [them]’.⁵⁰ In a sermon, however, Augustine can tell his audience that ‘the imagination of your heart deceives you’.⁵¹ This distrust of imagination as such — presumably deriving from the Bible’s warnings as well as from the Stoic moral tradition and the Platonic general rejection of the senses — will be seen to have played a large role in Augustine’s long-time reservations about contemporary visions and miracles.

About a year after his baptism, as Augustine tells his readers only in 426 however, he witnessed another cure through prayer. It took place when he had returned from Rome to Carthage and was staying with a friend, Innocentius, who had just undergone an extremely painful surgery to remove fistulae in the rectum. To the patient’s acute distress, however, it was discovered that an additional one had been overlooked and that another surgical removal — an anaesthetic is not mentioned — needed to be carried out the next day. When the doctor who had made the diagnosis had

⁴⁷ Pranger, ‘Augustine and the Return of the Senses’, p. 65.

⁴⁸ Augustine, *De Gen.*, XII. 6, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 386, lines 22–24.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *De Gen.*, XII. 25, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 418, lines 19–20. On Augustine’s view of imagination, see Bundy, *Theory of Imagination*, pp. 153–76.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *De Gen.*, XII. 9, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 391, lines 14–17: ‘illius enim spiritus informata est, ut videret, huius mens inluminata, ut intellegeret’; see Bundy, *Theory of Imagination*, p. 168. Cf. Kearney, *Wake of Imagination*, pp. 116–18.

⁵¹ Augustine, *Sermo* 135. v. 6, PL, 38, col. 749[A]: ‘fefellit te imaginatio cordis tui’. Augustine is the first to use the word ‘imaginatio’ in a consistent philosophical manner (Kearney, *Wake of Imagination*, p. 117).

left, the whole household broke out in wailing as though at a funeral. Augustine's description lets the image of death return when he says that Innocentius, terrified, asked him and the other pious men who had been visiting him daily to be present the next day at what he expected to be his funeral rather than his surgery:

For such was the terror his former pains had produced, that he had no doubt but that he would die in the hands of the surgeons. They comforted him, and exhorted him to put his trust in God, and nerve his will like a man. Then we went to prayer; but while we, in the usual way, were kneeling and bending to the ground, he cast himself down, as if some one were hurling him violently to the earth, and began to pray; but in what a manner, with what earnestness and emotion, with what a flood of tears, with groans, sobs, and shakings of his whole body that he almost lost consciousness, who can describe it in words! [...] I could not pray at all. This only I briefly said in my heart: 'O Lord, what prayers of your people do you hear if you don't hear these?' For it seemed to me that nothing could be added to this prayer, unless he expired in praying.

When the dreaded day dawned, the servants of God were present, as they had promised to be; the surgeons arrived, all was prepared that was demanded by the hour, the frightful instruments are produced; all look on in wonder and suspense. [...] the knots of the bandages are untied; the part is bared; the surgeon examines it, and, with knife in hand, looks attentively and intently for the fold of tissue that is to be cut. He searches for it with his eyes; he feels for it with his finger; he applies every kind of scrutiny — but finds only a perfectly firm cicatrix.

No words of mine can describe the joy, and praise, and thanksgiving to the merciful and almighty God which was poured from the lips of all, with tears of gladness. Let the scene be imagined rather than described.⁵²

⁵² Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 106–12, 113–20, 123–26, 128–35, CCSL, 48, pp. 817–18: "Tantus enim eum metus ex prioribus invaserat poenis, ut se inter medicorum manus non dubitaret esse moriturum. Consolati sunt eum illi et hortati, ut in Deo fideret eiusque voluntatem viriliter ferret. Inde ad orationem ingressi sumus; ubi nobis ex more genua figentibus atque incumbentibus terrae ille se ita proiecit, tamquam fuisset aliquo graviter inpellente prostratus, et coepit orare: quibus modis, quo affectu, quo motu animi, quo fluvio lacrimarum, quibus gemitibus, atque singultibus succutientibus omnia membra eius et paene intercludentibus spiritum, quis ullis explicet verbis? [...] Ego tamen prorsus orare non poteram; hoc tantummodo breviter in corde meo dixi: "Domine, quas tuorum preces exaudis, si has non exaudis?" Nihil enim mihi videbatur addi iam posse, nisi ut expiraret orando. [...] Inluxit dies qui metuabatur, aderant servi Dei, sicut se adfuturos esse promiserant, ingressi sunt medici, parantur omnia quae hora illa poscebat, tremenda ferramenta proferuntur adtonitis suspensisque omnibus. [...] solvuntur nodi ligamentorum, nudatur locus, inspicit medicus et secandum illum sinum armatus atque intentus inquirat. Scrutatur oculis digitisque contrectat, temptat denique modis omnibus — invenit firmissimam cicatricem. Iam laetitia illa et laus atque gratiarum actio misericordiae et omnipotentis Deo, quae fusa est ore omnium lacrimantibus gaudiis, non est committenda meis verbis; cogitetur potius quam dicatur."

Since Augustine later relates this as the first of the contemporary miracles which he begins to describe in his *City of God*, he did by then publicly admit to it as an early contemporary miracle — albeit a private one — in Africa.⁵³

His repeated allusions to death in this story are no doubt intentional. For the whole event, including Innocentius's violent prostration and his prolonged gut-wrenching sobbing and groaning, is presented as a kind of death-experience, from which the patient emerged reborn and healed, as it were. In this period, the combination of prayer with tears appears to have been understood as a purification from death-bringing sins as well as a way to exert pressure on the addressed, and the characterization of a cure as a spiritual resuscitation recurs in many stories of miraculous healing in the subsequent centuries.⁵⁴ Today too, however, the reconfiguration of mind and body through what is now described as 'liminal' experiences — those which transgress the boundaries of everyday experience and thus liberate from its psychological constrictions — has been observed and recorded by anthropologists in the healing rituals of present-day non-Christian traditional societies. In psychological idiom, such a transgressive experience can break up and dissolve the person's internal disharmonies that have been expressing themselves in the physical affliction and make possible a new, harmonious alignment of energies that allows the body to return to its natural health.⁵⁵ Augustine, then, knew early on that such prayer could access what he regarded as divine healing. And he may have recognized it in private, for as will be seen in 400–02 he refers in passing to what may have been a practice of faith healing not only in Donatist circles but possibly also in Catholic ones.⁵⁶

Later in the *Confessions*, not in its chronological place, Augustine now for the first time publicly acknowledges the martyrs' miracles in Milan — not for themselves, however, but as he suddenly remembers them in connection with Ambrose's introduction of the hymns that moved him so much a year later, when he had been baptized.⁵⁷ That he did not see the martyrs' remains himself appears when he

⁵³ I have compared the pattern of this cure with others in my forthcoming 'Patterns of Miracle'.

⁵⁴ On tears, see Adnès, 'Larmes'; Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, p. 184, note that it is recorded frequently as preceding eleventh- and twelfth-century cures. A cure as a resuscitation: Gregory of Tours, *Virtutes sancti Martini*, III. *prol.*, lines 7–12, MGH SSrM, 1. 2, p. 632; see de Nie, 'History and Miracle'.

⁵⁵ As already indicated, a particularly perspicacious study is that of Devisch, *Weaving the Threads of Life*.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Contra lit. Petil.*, II. lv. 126, CSEL, 52, p. 91, lines 10–14. For the date, see Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, p. 638.

⁵⁷ Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 140.

describes their bodies as uncorrupted, whereas Ambrose speaks of bones and 'blood', and when he says that the blind man touched the bier with his handkerchief, whereas Ambrose says he touched the fringe of the cloth covering the bodies.⁵⁸ His knowledge of the events must therefore be based upon oral reports.⁵⁹ Describing the effect of the miracle however, he writes approvingly, addressing God: 'here-upon your fame spread, hereupon your praises shone, hereupon the mind of that enemy [Empress Justina], although not brought to be healed by believing, was nevertheless restrained from her fury of persecuting'.⁶⁰ Something has happened, then, to release his inhibitions concerning — if not, at the time, scepticism about — Ambrose's presentation of the miracles in Milan. It may be that the testimony of Paulinus of Nola, with whom, as will be seen below, Augustine had begun to correspond in 396, played a role in this change of mind.

Then, however, comes a moment of self-reflection: '[I give] thanks to you, my God! From where did you lead my remembering so that I should even confess to you these great things which, having forgotten them, I had passed over?'⁶¹ God, then, has now reminded him, through the memory of his emotional experience of Ambrose's hymns after his conversion, of the earlier miracle (historically connected with the hymns) which had slipped out of his mind, causing him to pass it over in the story of his conversion — evidently because it played no role in that event. He thereupon voices regret:

And yet even then, when the odours of your ointments were so fragrant, we did not run after you; for this reason I wept even more abundantly while singing your hymns [after my baptism] — having once sighed for you and now at last breathing in you, insofar as there can be free air in this house of grass.⁶²

⁵⁸ Respectively: Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 7. 16, lines 16–17, CCSL, 27, p. 142, as compared with Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 2, lines 17–18, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 128 (and cf. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 148); and Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 7. 16, line 25, CCSL, 27, p. 142, as compared with Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 17, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 137, lines 181–83 (and cf. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 149).

⁵⁹ Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 150.

⁶⁰ Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 7. 16, lines 17–18, CCSL, 27, p. 142: 'inde fama discurrens, inde laudes tuae ferventes, lucentes, inde illius inimicae animus etsi ad credendi sanitatem non applicatus, a persequeundi tamen furore compressus est'.

⁶¹ Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 7. 16, lines 30–32, CCSL, 27, p. 142: 'gratias tibi, deus meus! unde et quo duxisti recordationem meam, ut haec etiam confiterer tibi, quae magna oblitus praeterieram?'

⁶² Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 7. 16, lines 32–35, CCSL, 27, p. 142: 'et tamen tunc, cum ita fraglaret odor unguentorum tuorum, non currebamus post te; ideo plus flebam inter cantica hymnorum tuorum, olim suspirans tibi et tandem respirans, quantum patet aura in domo faenea'.

The phrase ‘the odour of thy ointment’ is a reminiscence of a passage in Ambrose’s thoughts about the soul, *On Isaac and the Soul*, given as a sermon at the time of the martyrs’ invention.⁶³ Augustine here mourns his lack of sensitivity at that time to the beauty and liberation of the Truth — and this now includes the miracle. More than ten years later, he has finally admitted to himself and to the world that a true miracle can happen through the martyrs in his time.

Later in the *Confessions*, however, he is still very guarded about miracles, saying: ‘tongues are a sign, not to believers, but to those who don’t believe’.⁶⁴ Thus it is — or should be — no longer necessary to convince through miracles, to which only ‘ignorance, the mother of admiration, pays attention because of its reverent fear of those hidden signs’.⁶⁵ This is the philosopher speaking. In his personal life too he rejects a perverse seeking after ‘miracula’ in strange sights (illusions in the theatre) and in the manifestation of hidden powers (as in magic) rather than in faith; for ‘through this even in religion itself, God is tempted: when signs and wonders are asked of him, not for some kind of health, but merely through a wishing for the experience itself’.⁶⁶ Astonishment, then, is merely sensation-seeking. We will later see him attributing this attitude to the schismatic Donatists. But it also appears to have been a more personal source of his rejection of miracles when he writes: ‘by how many machinations of suggestions did the Enemy work in me that I should seek for some sign!’⁶⁷ He has been cracking down too, then, upon his own desire to experience or recognize a divine message in a dream or extraordinary event, a habit he is likely to have picked up from his mother. For, earlier in the *Confessions*, he relates that her constant prayers for a divine message about his future had not been granted and that she saw only ‘something empty and fantastic’ produced by the human spirit, and recognized it as such.⁶⁸

⁶³ Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 152.

⁶⁴ Augustine, *Conf.*, XIII. 21. 29, lines 9–10, CCSL, 27, p. 258: ‘linguae in signo sunt non fidelibus, sed infidelibus’. Cf. I Corinthians 14. 22.

⁶⁵ Augustine, *Conf.*, XIII. 21. 30, lines 29–30, CCSL, 27, p. 258: ‘ubi intenta fit ignorantia mater admirationis in timore occultorum signorum’.

⁶⁶ Augustine, *Conf.*, X. 35. 55, lines 34–36, CCSL, 27, p. 185: ‘hinc etiam in ipsa religione deus temptatur, cum signa et prodigia flagitantur, non ad aliquam salutem, sed ad solam experientiam desiderata’; cf. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, pp. 265–66.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *Conf.*, X. 35. 56, lines 46–47, CCSL, 27, p. 185: ‘quantis mecum suggestionum machinationibus agit inimicus ut signum aliquod petam!’ Cf. Lancel, ‘Saint Augustin et le miracle’, p. 72.

⁶⁸ Augustine, *Conf.*, VI. 13. 23, lines 8–13, CCSL, 27, p. 89.

'Against Those So-to-speak Miracle-mongers my God Has Warned Me': Distrust (c. 400–c. 424)

Augustine's birth town Thagaste, formerly entirely Donatist, had become Catholic in the middle of the fourth century through the pressure of the sanctions imposed by imperial legislation.⁶⁹ Numidia, on the contrary, had remained a Donatist stronghold, and when Augustine came to Hippo their party was so dominant that their bishop could even forbid bakers to bake for the Catholic minority.⁷⁰ The schismatics' prehistory appears to be connected with a disaffected and disadvantaged rural proletariat in the interior regions that became the party's radical wing.⁷¹

Robert Markus's characterization of the Donatists as continuing the ideals of the older Christian church over against the compromises made by the post-Constantinian imperial one puts Augustine's continuing castigation of them as wilful separatists and 'heretics' in perspective.⁷² Their ideal was the former Christian one of the apostolic life, miracles, and martyrdom, and consequently they regarded themselves as the only true Church.⁷³ Believing themselves — like the former Montanists, it must be remarked — to be moved at all times by the Holy Spirit, they regarded it as inspiring and leading all their policies and councils.⁷⁴ Such a lack of self-criticism and of consideration of other viewpoints must itself have predisposed Augustine against their views. Against their contention that the whole Catholic hierarchy in Africa was illegitimate, Augustine was to preach the divine efficacy of the sacraments themselves as unconnected with the quality of those who administered them.

As will be seen in Augustine's writings about the Donatists, they appear to have become overly excited about and reliant upon miracles and visions. When these did not succeed in persuading the Catholic hierarchy, the schismatics, or at least their radical wing, tried to achieve dominance by scandals, intrigues, and physical attacks

⁶⁹ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, p. 184; Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 232.

⁷⁰ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, p. 191; Augustine, *Contra lit. Petil.*, II. 83. 184, CSEL, 52, p. 114, lines 12–15; Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 216.

⁷¹ Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, pp. 233, 383. In two articles Peter Brown has weighed the roles played by local societies and economic inequalities in this conflict that vaunted religion as its banner: 'Religious Dissent in the Later Roman Empire', and 'Christianity and Local Culture in Late Roman Africa'.

⁷² Markus, 'Between Marrou and Brown'.

⁷³ Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, VII, 155–58.

⁷⁴ Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, VII, 156–57.

that included mutilations and murder of Catholic landowners as well as of clergy by so-called ‘saints’ living around cells, the Circumcellions.⁷⁵ Both Augustine himself and his biographer Possidius as Bishop of Calama narrowly escaped several attempts on their lives.⁷⁶ The conflict, then, was by no means that of words alone, and it is this acutely dangerous situation that is the background for Augustine’s denial of their miracles. For years, he nevertheless tried to persuade them, through debates with their leaders, to integrate, as he said, into the mixed church of saints and sinners that was the only one possible in this world. Their obdurate opposition, however, gradually led him to qualify them as ‘heretics’ and thereby to acquiesce in economical sanctions — such as the confiscation of their churches — carried out by the state as necessary to effect their return into the Catholic fold. After a hundred years of schism, and in part due to Augustine’s urging, the official reconciliation of the two parties was finally effected at a council in Carthage in 411; but this did not immediately convince everyone.⁷⁷

Augustine’s statements about the Donatists and their miracles give an insight into his views about contemporary miracles as such in this period. One of the first occurs in his commentary on Psalm 9.⁷⁸ After having indicated that the miracles of God — here called ‘mirabilia’ — happened not only in bodies but also in souls and that visible miracles illumined the soul to understand invisible things,⁷⁹ he comes to speak of the Roman state’s persecutions. Comparing these to the violent and false acts of a lion, he says that the first, violent, persecution had taken place with torture and executions under the pagan empire, and

the next, fraudulent, persecution is what is now carried out by heretics and false brethren; the third is the one to come by the Antichrist [...]. The violence was [manifested] in the empire; the deceit [now] in the [false brethren’s] miracles. [...] ‘He intrigues’, [the psalmist says], ‘so that he may capture the poor’: this pertains to the deceit.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l’Afrique chrétienne*, VII, 157.

⁷⁶ Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l’Afrique chrétienne*, VII, 159; Possidius, *Vita sancti Augustini*, X. 5–6, lines 17–25, and XII. 1–2, lines 1–10, ed. by Bastiaensen, pp. 154 and 156, respectively.

⁷⁷ On Augustine and the Donatists through 411, see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, pp. 227–89. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l’Afrique chrétienne*, VII, gives a complete account of all Augustine’s writings against the Donatists.

⁷⁸ Date: Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 74.

⁷⁹ Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos* [hereafter *Enarr. in ps.*], IX. 2, lines 11–13, 15–19, CCSL, 38, p. 59.

⁸⁰ Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.*, IX. 27, lines 7–10, 11, 14–15, CCSL, 38, pp. 70–71: ‘Altera persecutio fraudulenta est, quae nunc per cuiusmodi haereticos et falsos fratres agitur; tertia superest per

The reasoning is that their being 'heretics' makes the Donatists' miracles false Satanic ones, intended to capture unwary souls. In his comments on Psalm 10 (11), after quoting Matthew's saying 'From their works you shall know them' (Matthew 7. 16), Augustine sarcastically describes the Donatists' 'works': 'To be sure, I see your marvellous works, the daily deeds of violence of the Circumcellions as they rush around here and there led by their bishops and priests, and they call their terrible clubs "Israels".'⁸¹

Preaching in 394 on Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Augustine warns his community against being deceived by miracles of those who use Christ's name but do not imitate his deeds, quoting Christ's saying that he will not recognize those who, without righteousness, simply prophesied, exorcized, and worked wonders in his name.⁸² To counter those who might not believe that miracles could be done by the unrighteous Augustine then recalls the magi in Egypt and also reminds of Christ's warning: 'there shall arise false christs and false prophets, and they shall show great signs and wonders, so that even the elect shall be deceived' (Matthew 24. 23–25). His parishioners are therefore urged to adhere to Christ's precepts — and not count on miracles — if they wish to reach heaven.

In his *Teaching the Catechism to the Uneducated*, written in 400,⁸³ Augustine refers again to the apparently widespread visionary mentality among Donatists and how the Church's teaching was to remedy it in those preparing for baptism:

If by chance he has replied that he became a Christian through being divinely admonished or frightened, he gives us a most felicitous entry to begin [our catechism]: how great God's care is for us. To be sure, his orientation towards this kind of miracles and dreams should be transferred to the more certain way [to God] and to the oracles of the Scriptures [...]. And in any case he should be shown that God wished him to choose the more certain and safer way [to him] by not himself admonishing him or compelling [this person] to be made a Christian and to join the Church, nor thus instructing him by such signs and revelations, because he had already prepared the way in the holy Scriptures, in which [the catechumen] would not seek visible miracles but would accustom himself to hope for invisible ones, [thereby] being instructed not while sleeping but while awake.⁸⁴

antichristum ventura [...]. Vim habebit in imperio, dolum in miraculis. [...] "Insidiatur", inquit, "ut rapiat pauperem"; hoc ad dolum pertinet.'

⁸¹ Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.*, X. 5, lines 20–23, CCSL, 38, p. 78: 'Video plane mira opera, quotidianas violentias Circumcellionum sub episcopis et presbyteris ducibus circumquaque volitare, et terribiles fustes "Israeles" vocare.'

⁸² Luke 10. 20; Augustine, *De sermone domini in monte*, II, xxv, 84, lines 1933–50, CCSL, 35.

⁸³ Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, p. 403.

⁸⁴ Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, VI. 10, lines 1–13, CCSL, 46, p. 130: 'Quod si forte se divinitus admonitum vel territum responderit, ut fieret Christianus, laetissimum nobis exordiendi

Conversions through a dream or vision were not uncommon in this period,⁸⁵ but Augustine is clearly trying to lead his contemporaries from individualistic, uncontrollable ‘dreaming’ to an understanding of God’s ‘way’ through a clerically guided reading and understanding of his revelation in the recognized Scriptures. As will become evident through his phrasing, as far as the subject of miracles is concerned, and perhaps not only there, Augustine’s model for acquiring and internalizing spiritual knowledge is a verbal, literate one: a performative ‘reading’ — that is, deciphering — and understanding of God’s ‘word’ or message in whatever form it can be discerned.

A canon of the council of Carthage in 401, which Augustine inspired, shows the kind of popular practices with which he had to contend. It reads:

altars which have been placed here and there in fields and along roads as shrines of the martyrs, in which no body or relic of martyrs are proven to be kept, are to be demolished, if possible, by the bishops who govern these places. If this is not possible, however, because of popular tumults, the people are to be admonished not to frequent these places, so that those who know rightly may not be overcome and held captive by the superstition there, and so that in no way a shrine of the martyrs may be accepted as proven except where there is a body or some relics whose original residence or possessor or passion is confirmed by a trustworthy tradition. For those altars which have everywhere been established through dreams and empty pseudo-revelations of nondescript persons are to be in every way disapproved of.⁸⁶

Similarly, and contrary to what appears to be an enthusiasm about martyrs also among the Catholic community that led to the spinning of ever more marvellous

aditum praebet, quanta deo sit cura pro nobis. Sane ab huiusmodi miraculorum sive somniorum ad scripturarum solidiorem viam et oracula certiora transferenda est eius intentio [...]. Et utique demonstrandum est ei, quod ipse dominus non eum admoneret aut compelleret fieri Christianum et incorporari ecclesiae, seu talibus signis aut revelationibus erudiret, nisi iam praeparatum inter in scripturis sanctis, ubi non quaereret visibilia miracula, sed invisibilia sperare consuesceret, neque dormiens, sed vigilans moneretur.’

⁸⁵ Dulaey, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de Saint Augustin*, pp. 151–58.

⁸⁶ Concilium Carthaginensis, canon 14, in *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. by Mansi, col. 971B–C (cited in Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, pp. 146–47): ‘Item placuit, ut altaria quae passim per agros aut vias, tamquam memoriae martyrum constituuntur, in quibus nullum corpus aut reliquiae martyrum conditae probantur, ab episcopis, qui eisdem locis praesunt, si fieri potest, evertantur. Si autem hoc propter tumultus populares non finitur, plebes tamen admoneantur, ne illa loca frequentent, ut qui recte sapiunt, nulla ibi superstitione devincti teneatur. Et omnino nulla memoria martyrum probabiliter acceptetur, nisi aut ibi corpus, aut aliquae certae reliquiae sint, aut ubi origo alicuius habitationis, vel possessionis, vel passionis fidelissima origine traditur. Nam quae per somnia et inanes quasi revelationes quorumlibet hominum ubique constituuntur altaria, omnimode reprobentur.’

and inspiring tales about them, Augustine later firmly refused to read in church anything but the authentic records of their trials and executions.⁸⁷

His *Letter to the Catholics on the Sect of the Donatists* is the clearest and most complete statement of his view about contemporary miracles in the period before 424. The miracles, granted prayers, and visions claimed by the schismatics, he writes, are 'figmenta mendacium hominum vel portenta fallacium spirituum' (figments of human lies or portents of false spirits), proclaimed by those who, as predicted for the last times, would try to lead even the elect astray. They are 'doctrin[ae] daemoniorum' (doctrines of demons),

thus if anyone's prayer at the shrines of the heretics is granted, it is not on account of the merit of the place but on account of the merit of his wish that he receives either good or bad. For the spirit of the Lord, as is written, fills the whole earth. [...]

Therefore many [who pray] are heard, and in many ways not only Catholic Christians but also pagans and heretics are given to various errors and superstitions. They are heard, however, by seducing spirits, who nevertheless do nothing unless permitted, by God's sublime and ineffable judgement as to what is to be granted to whom, either from God himself as a punishment for wickedness, as a solace from misery, or as an admonition to seek eternal salvation.⁸⁸

What must be 'public' miracles, then, *are* definitely happening, apparently also in Africa and to some misguided Catholics there, but because they happen outside the Catholic context Augustine regards them as necessarily performed by demons.

Canonical Scripture, as divinely revealed knowledge, is Augustine's fundament, as it was for Ambrose. As he explains in the next two sections of the letter, its authority, and not the Donatists' erratic opinions, is the reason that he cannot accept their claim to be the only true Church and their miracles:

for I do not say that I believe that Donatus's communion is not the church of Christ because some of their bishops were overcome by ecclesiastical, municipal, and judicial acts to

⁸⁷ As is demonstrated in his answer to a letter from Paulinus of Milan asking for such stories by Lepellety, 'Les Réticences de saint Augustin face aux légendes hagiographiques d'après la lettre Divjak *29'.

⁸⁸ Augustine, *Epistola ad catholicos de secta Donatistarum* [hereafter *Epist. ad Cath.*], XIX. 49, CSEL, 52, pp. 295, lines 21–25, p. 296, lines 15–22: 'Porro si aliquis in haereticorum memoriis orans exauditur, non pro merito loci, sed pro merito desiderii sui recipit sive bonum sive malum. spiritus enim domini, sicut scriptum est, replevit orbem terrarum. [...] exaudiuntur ergo multi et multis modis non solum christiani catholici, sed et pagani et Iudaei et haeretici variis erroribus et superstitionibus dediti. exaudiuntur autem vel ab spiritibus seductoribus, qui tamen nihil faciunt nisi permittantur, deo sublimiter atque ineffabiliter iudicante quid cuique tribuendum sit, sive ab ipso deo vel ad poenam malitiae vel ad solacium miseriae vel ad admonitionem quaerendae salutis aeternae.'

hand over the divine books to be burned, or because they did not obtain their cause in the episcopal decision which they requested from the emperor, or because there are such leaders of Circumcellions among them who throw themselves off precipices or into fires they themselves have lighted to be burned, or even coerce and terrify unwilling men to kill them, desiring so many willing and frenzied deaths so that they might be worshipped by men, or that at their tombs drunken crowds of wandering men and criminals among them might bury themselves day and night in wine and corrupt themselves in execrable acts. Let all this be the chaff that does not prejudice their harvest — if they were to hold fast to the Church.⁸⁹

The accusations he mentions are those which the Donatists levelled at the Catholics as the reason for rejecting them. The barely concealed sarcasm is withering. But his point is again that the Church, while on this earth, consists of sinners as well as saints.⁹⁰ The true Church, he continues, is based upon criteria set by the Scriptures, not by human decisions by bishops, nor even — as he now, surprisingly, says — ‘because in holy places throughout the world which are frequented by our communion so many miracles and granted prayers take place’.⁹¹ It looks as though ‘public’ miracles are meant here. In 401, then, Augustine had come to acknowledge ‘so many miracles’ ‘in holy places all over the world’ as Catholic miracles. There is, however, no indication in his writings that any of these, except spurious ones, occurred in Africa. And indeed, as will be seen below, in a letter a few years later he says that, presumably contrary to those happening in Italy and the east, to his knowledge, (true) miracles had never happened in Africa.⁹² These contemporary miracles, however, are not brought forward as such in his subsequent writings, and

⁸⁹ Augustine, *Epist. ad Cath.*, XIX. 50, CSEL, 52, pp. 297, lines 1–18: ‘nec ego dico ideo mihi esse credendum communionem Donati non esse ecclesiam Christi, quia quidam, qui apud eos episcopi fuerunt, divina instrumenta ignibus tradidisse gestis ecclesiasticis et municipalibus et iudicialibus convincuntur, aut quia in iudicio episcoporum, quod a imperatore petiverant, causam suam non obtinuerunt, aut quia provocantes ad ipsum imperatorem etiam ab ipso contrariam sibi sententiam meruerunt, aut quia tales sunt apud eos circumcellionum principes, aut quia tanta mala committunt circumcelliones, aut quia sunt apud eos, qui se per abrupta praecipitent vel concremandos ignibus inferant, quos sibimet accenderunt, aut trucidationem suam etiam invitis hominibus terrendo extorqueant et tot spontaneas et furiosas mortes, ut colantur ab hominibus, appetant, aut quod eorum sepulcra ebriosi greges vagorum et vagarum permixta nequitia die noctuque se vino sepeliant flagitiisque corrumpant. sit ista omnis turba palea eorum nec frumentis praeiudicet, si ipsi ecclesiam tenent.’

⁹⁰ On this view, see Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 45–62.

⁹¹ Augustine, *Epist. ad Cath.*, XIX. 50, CSEL, 52, p. 297, lines 24–26: ‘quia per totum orbem in locis sanctis, quae frequentat nostra communio, tanta mirabilia vel exauditionum vel sanitatum fiunt’.

⁹² Augustine, *Epist.*, 78. 3, CSEL, 34. 2, p. 336, lines 7–9.

his very reserved attitude towards contemporary ones continues until the 420s. It seems, therefore, that although by that time he did know about them — as he indeed says in his *Reconsiderations* — he was not yet ready to admit to this publicly and consistently. The reason for this reserve, which he later did not care to mention, must be that he then wished to avoid what might look like a contest with the Donatists about the authenticity of *their* miracles.

For in this letter he indeed adds that, by themselves, miracles prove nothing, saying: 'whatever of such things occur in the Catholic [Church] are to be approved [only] because they take place within the Catholic [Church], [and] therefore it is not so that the Catholic Church is made manifest because these [miracles] take place in her'.⁹³ He adds that it is their occurring according to the biblical predictions, then, in a universal Church — and that cannot be the Donatists' African one alone — that makes them true ones.⁹⁴ The role of the martyr, however, is downplayed; we see that he does not attribute these miracles to them but to God's power appearing in holy *places* — as he will still do in the early 420s.

In his reply to the Donatist Petilianus in the early years of the fifth century, however, Augustine gives another kind of explanation why miracles by themselves are not a criterion of religious truth:

the apostle says, 'though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing' [1 Corinthians 13. 2]. Here, therefore, we must inquire who it is that has charity: you will find that it is no one else but those who are lovers of unity. For as to the driving out of devils and the working of miracles, seeing that many who do not do such things nevertheless belong to the kingdom of God, while many who do them do not belong to it, neither our party nor your party have any cause for boasting if perhaps they are able to do these things.⁹⁵

He may be referring here to the standard exorcism then practiced in both churches by some of the clergy and perhaps also to their healing privately through anointing

⁹³ Augustine, *Epist. ad Cath.*, XIX. 50, CSEL, 52, p. 298, lines 2–4: 'quaecumque talia in catholica fiunt, ideo sunt approbanda, quia in catholica fiunt. non ideo ipsa catholica manifestatur, quia haec in ea fiunt'.

⁹⁴ Augustine, *Epist. ad Cath.*, XIX. 51, CSEL, 52, p. 298, lines 16–25.

⁹⁵ Augustine, *Contra lit. Petil.*, II. lv. 126, CSEL, 52, p. 91, lines 7–14: 'Apostolus ait: *si fidem habeam ita ut montes transferam, caritatem autem non habeam, nihil sum*. hoc ergo quaerendum est, quis habeat caritatem; invenies non esse nisi eos qui diligunt unitatem. nam de exclusionem daemonum et de potentia miraculorum, quoniam plerique talia non faciunt et tamen ad regnum dei pertinent, plerique autem faciunt et non pertinent, nec nostri nec vestri debent gloriari, si qui forte ista possunt.' Dated 401/05 by Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 184, and as 400/02 by Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, p. 638.

and prayer. If so, then in these years he *was* aware of some contemporary cures among Catholics — such as that of his friend Innocentius in 387 — but, because of the Donatist vaunting of their miracles, preferred to divert attention to other, more verifiable and controllable, things. When writing his *Reconsiderations*, however, there was no longer any reason to keep the subject of miracles out of the public eye in Africa, and he could admit to what had earlier appeared to him as a phenomenon too hot to handle.

The theme of deceit reappears with particular passion in one of Augustine's sermons on the Gospel of John, perhaps in 407/08:

Let no one sell you fables: [that] Pontius also performed a miracle; [that] Donatus too prayed and God answered him from heaven! [...] those [who speak in this way] are deceived or are deceiving [you]. [...] against those — as it were — miracle-mongers my God warned me, saying: 'In the last times pseudoprophets will arise, performing signs and wonders, so that they might lead into error, if possible, even the elect; behold what I foretold to you' [Mark 12. 22–23]. The Bridegroom has therefore warned us that we should not be deceived even by miracles. [...] [For] outside the unity [of the Church] he who performs miracles is nothing.⁹⁶

Augustine continues by saying that the people of Israel were likewise united, while the magi who performed their miracles before the Pharaoh were outside this unity (Exodus 7. 12 and 22, 8. 7), and that it was the people of Israel who were saved; and that while there were many Christians in apostolic times who could not perform the miracles which Peter did, they nevertheless rejoiced that their names were written in heaven.⁹⁷

If there is anything that all this evidence makes clear it is that, in spite of his discouragement, Augustine's community obviously admired miracles, wanted and expected them to happen, and felt a great deal of pressure to be seen to perform them. At the end of the sermon, Augustine's last words betray his great distress at this situation, saying that sorrow has forced him to say much about other things and that this prevented him from explaining the reading of the day; he urges his audience 'to take time for sighs and prayers for the ones who up to now are deaf

⁹⁶ Augustine, *Tract.*, XIII. 17, lines 1–2, 3, 6–11, 14–15, CCSL, 36, p. 139, p. 140: 'Nemo ergo vobis fabulas vendat. Et Pontius fecit miraculum; et Donatus oravit, et respondit Deus de caelo. [...] aut falluntur aut fallunt. [...] contra istos, ut si loquar, mirabiliarios cautum me fecit Deus, dicens: "In novissimis temporibus exsurgent pseudoprophetae, facientes signa et prodigia, ut in errorem inducant, si fieri potest, etiam electos; ecce praedixi vobis." Ergo cautos nos fecit sponsus, quia et miraculis decipi non debemus. [...] praeter unitatem, et qui facit miracula nihil est.' On the miracles of Pontius and Donatus's prophecy, see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, pp. 186, 131.

⁹⁷ Augustine, *Tract.*, XIII. 17, lines 20–23, CCSL, 36, p. 140. Cf. Luke 10. 17, 20.

and don't understand'.⁹⁸ To elicit such an outburst of passion, something must have taken place that caused him great anxiety — perhaps persons from his own community trying to imitate the Donatists' miracles or going over to them because of their miracles?

Augustine's gut reaction to them as prideful deceptions carried out by pseudo-Christians and leading away from the spiritual condition that truly mattered becomes clear in a sermon to the people on Psalm 130 (131). Its initial sentence 'O Lord my heart is not exalted [in pride], my eyes are not directed too high; nor do I engage in great things and in miracles (*mirabilibus*) that are above my [powers]' is explained, by pointing to Simon Magus, as: 'I was not arrogant, I did not want to become known among men through miracles.'⁹⁹ In the present time, too, he says, 'there are men who delight in performing a miracle, and expect [miracles] from those who have standing in the Church; and those who appear to do this for themselves, wish to do such things because they think that they would not belong to God if they did not do them'.¹⁰⁰ Augustine counters by saying that each member of Christ's body has his own task and each should wish to perform only that humbly, as well as he can. Later he reminds his audience to observe the Lord's precepts and urges 'don't put your trust in man, [and] don't tempt God by wishing for miracles'.¹⁰¹ This sermon too seems to show that some Catholics probably did perform healings, privately or publicly. But Augustine is determined to keep the subject of miracles off the Catholic believer's agenda, as it were, out of the picture of a perfect faith — for, in his view, desiring miracles is not only a temptation to pride but an insult to God. Thus in 412/16, he concludes an explanation of Psalm 90 (91) with the words "Therefore let us not tempt the Lord by saying "If we cleave to you, let us perform a miracle"". ¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Augustine, *Tract.*, XIII. 18, lines 12–13, CCSL, 36, p. 141: 'vacare gemitibus, et orationibus pro his qui adhuc surdi sunt, et non intellegunt'.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.*, CXXX. 1, 5, lines 4–5, CCSL, 40, p. 1900: 'non fui superbus, nolui quasi in mirabilibus innotescere hominibus'.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.* CXXX. 6, lines 1–4, CCSL, 40, p. 1901: 'ergo sunt homines quos delectat miraculum facere, et ab eis qui profecerunt in Ecclesia miraculum exigunt; et ipsi qui quasi profecisse sibi videntur, talia volunt facere, et putant se ad Deum non pertinere si non fecerint'.

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.*, CXXX. 13, lines 32–33, CCSL, 40, p. 1909: 'in homine spem noli ponere, desiderando miracula noli tentare deum'.

¹⁰² Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.*, XC. 2. 7, lines 44–45, CCSL, 39, pp. 1272–73: 'Itaque non tentemus Dominum, ut dicamus: "Si ad te pertinemus, miraculum faciamus"'; date: Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 147.

Still in 417–18, when the schism with the Donatists had been healed and, unbeknownst to Augustine, Orosius was already travelling west with Stephen's relics, his treatise on the apostle John's letter to the Parthians critiqued the desire for miracles — in former Donatist clergy? — as harmful curiosity, a theme that recurs in his writings.¹⁰³ Not only in the desire for shows, theatre, and magic,

in another way too does he [the Devil] tempt even the servants of God, so that they wish to perform a miracle, to see whether God would grant their request for miracles; this is curiosity, this is the desire of the eyes; it is not from the Father. If God gives it, do so; for he has granted that you may do it; but [this does not mean that] those who do not perform [miracles] therefore will not belong to the Kingdom of God. [Like the apostles, they should rejoice, instead, that their names are written in heaven.] For woe to you if your names are not written in heaven. But will there be any woe to you if you will not have resuscitated the dead? or any woe to you if you will not have walked on water? and any woe to you if you will not have exorcized demons? If you have accepted [the gift of] doing this, [however,] it should be used humbly, not proudly. For the Lord said of certain pseudo-prophets too that they would perform signs and prodigies [Matthew 24. 24]. Therefore let it not be [because of] worldly ambition. Worldly ambition is pride.¹⁰⁴

The inclusion of walking on water and the use of the future perfect tense for the possible performing of these miracles seem to point to Augustine's regarding them, probably excepting exorcism, as not presently occurring in his community. As we saw, Augustine's biographer reports that the Bishop himself had exorcized demons upon request. The desire for visible miracles is also presented as also one of the Devil's temptations of Christ, Augustine tells his listeners, and his response should be the model for present Christians in a similar situation:

When the Enemy suggests to you, 'What kind of man, what kind of Christian, are you? Did you ever perform a miracle, or let the dead arise through your prayers, or heal those with a fever? If you are truly someone of importance, perform some miracle!', answer, and say: 'It is written: "You shall not tempt the Lord your God"; therefore I will not tempt

¹⁰³ 'Noxia curiosita[s]', as in Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXI. 8, line 115, CCSL, 48, p. 773; see Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, pp. 350–52.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, *In epistolam Joannis ad Parthos, Tractatus X* [hereafter *In epist. Joa. ad Parthos*], II. 13, PL, 35, col. 1996[C–D]: 'Aliquando tentat etiam servos Dei, ut velint quasi miraculum facere, tentare utrum exaudiat illos Deus in miraculis; curiositas est, hoc est desiderium oculorum; non est a Patre. Si dedit Deus, fac; obtulit enim ut facias: non enim qui non fecerunt, ad regnum Dei non pertinebunt. [...] Vae tibi enim, si nomen tuum non est scriptum in coelo. Numquid vae tibi, si non suscitaveris mortuos? numquid vae tibi, si non ambulaveris in mari? numquid vae tibi, si non excluseris daemonia? Si accepisti unde facias, utere humiliter, non superbe. Nam et de quibusdam pseudoprophetais dixit Dominus, quia facturi sunt signa et prodigia. Ergo non sit ambitio saeculi. Ambitio saeculi superbia est.'

God, as though I would not belong to God unless I performed one and did not belong if I did not'.¹⁰⁵

The Enemy's words seem to echo what Augustine has been hearing said around him. In apostolic times, he continues, the Holy Spirit poured down upon those who believed: 'signa erant temporis opportuna' (the signs fitted the times), signifying that the Gospel would spread to all languages of the world, but

that having been signified, [the miracle] was discontinued. Why do we now not expect those upon whom hands are laid so that they might receive the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues? Or when we lay our hands on those infants, do any of you expect them to speak in tongues? And when he sees them not speaking in tongues, does one of you say with a perverse heart: 'They did not receive the Holy Spirit; for if they had received it, they would speak in tongues in the same way as was then done'? If therefore a miracle does not bear witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit, how does each know himself to have received it? Let him ask his heart: if he loves his brother, the Spirit of God is in him [...]. For there can be no charity without the Spirit of God.¹⁰⁶

There is again some mild sarcasm here. The true miracle, Augustine urges, is now an interior one and, as brotherly love, it effects the solidarity of the Church.

'We Know of No Place Here Where Such Things Happen': Disappointment?

Theological issues and courteous compliments dominate the few extant letters of what must have been many more between Paulinus of Nola and Augustine from 396 on; in these, neither Felix nor Paulinus's poems about his miracles are mentioned.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Augustine, *In epist. Joa. ad Parthos*, II. 14, PL, 35, cols 1996[D]–1997[A]. 'Quando tibi suggerit inimicus, "Qualis homo, qualis christianus? modo vel unum miraculum fecisti, aut orationibus tuis mortui surrexerunt, aut febrientes sanasti? si vere esses alicuius momenti [meriti], faceres aliquod miraculum", responde et dic, "Scriptum est, *Non tentabis Deum tuum*, non ergo tentabo Deum, quasi tunc pertineam ad Deum si fecero miraculum, et non pertineam si non fecero".'

¹⁰⁶ Augustine, *In epist. Joa. ad Parthos*, VI. 10, PL, 35, cols 2025–26: 'Significatum est illud, et transiit. Numquid modo quibus imponitur manus ut accipiant Spiritum sanctum, hoc exspectatur, ut linguis loquantur? Aut quando imposuimus manum istis infantibus, attendit unusquisque vestrum utrum linguis loquerentur; et cum videret eos linguis non loqui, ita perverso corde aliquis vestrum fuit ut diceret: "Non acceperunt isti Spiritum sanctum; nam si accepissent, linguis loquerentur quemadmodum tunc factum est"? Si ergo per haec miracula non fiat modo testimonium praesentiae Spiritus sancti; unde fit, unde cognoscit quisque accepisse se Spiritum sanctum? Interroget cor suum: si diligit fratrem, manet Spiritus Dei in illo. [...] Non potest esse dilectio sine Spiritu Dei.'

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *Epist.* 27, CSEL, 34. 1, pp. 95–102; Augustine, *Epist.* 31 and 95, CSEL, 34. 2, pp. 1–8, 506–13. Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 4, 6, 45, and 50, CSEL, 29, pp. 18–24, 39–42, 379–87, 404–23; cf. Fabre, *Saint Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne*, pp. 236–41.

It is likely, however, that some of Paulinus's poems were sent along with his letters and that these helped to persuade Augustine of the reality of contemporary Catholic miracles outside Africa, for Paulinus's status was such that his reports of miracles could not be doubted.¹⁰⁸ Around 404, therefore, when Augustine felt he could not determine the truth of an accusation of one of his clerics, who denied the offence, he had such faith in what had up to then happened at Nola that he sent both accuser and accused there so that through 'divino iudicio' (a divine judgement) — Felix is not mentioned — it would be shown who was being truthful.¹⁰⁹ In a letter to his own community explaining the move Augustine says he made them travel

to the holy place where the more terrifying works of God might more easily open up the one's unhealthy conscience or compel him to confess, either by punishment or by fear. For God is everywhere and not confined or limited by a place. [...] About those things that are known through sight by men, who is able to understand his decision why in certain places miracles happen and in others they do not? For very well known to many is the *holiness of the place where the body of the blessed Felix of Nola is buried*, to which place I wish them to go, so that from there it may be more easily written to us whatever shall have been *divinely shown forth* about them. For we too know that at the *memoria* of the saints in Milan, where demons miraculously and terrifyingly [are made to] confess [their crimes], a certain thief, who had come *to the place* to deceive with a false oath, was compelled to confess his theft and to restore what he had taken.

Is not Africa also full of the bodies of holy martyrs? And yet we know of no *place* here where such things happen. [It must be,] as the apostle says, that not all the saints have the gift of healing, nor do all have that of judging spirits, and thus he who 'allots to each his own [qualities] as he wishes' [cf. I Corinthians 12. 4–11] does not want to let those things happen in all the shrines of the saints.¹¹⁰ (emphasis added)

¹⁰⁸ On this correspondence, see Muys, *De briefwisseling van Paulinus van Nola en Augustinus*.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, *Epist.* 78. 2, lines 1–4, CSEL, 34. 2, p. 333, lines 17–18, p. 334, lines 3–4; cited in Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, p. 142, n. 1.

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *Epist.* 78. 3, CSEL, 34. 2, pp. 335, lines 6–10, 12–16, p. 336, lines 1–13: 'ad locum sanctum [...] ubi terribiliora opera dei non sanam cuiusque conscientiam multo facilius aperirent et ad confessionem vel poena vel timore compellerent. ubique quidem deus est et nullo continetur vel includitur loco [...]. verum tamen ad ista, quae hominibus visibiliter nota sunt, quis potest eius consilium perscrutari, quare in aliis locis haec miracula fiant, in aliis non fiant? multis enim notissima est sanctitas loci, ubi beati Felicis Nolensis corpus conditum est, quo volui ut pergerent, quia inde nobis facilius fidelisque scribi potest, quicquid in eorum aliquo divinitus fuerit prolatum. nam et nos novimus Mediolani apud memoriam sanctorum, ubi mirabiliter et terribiliter daemones confitentur furem quendam, qui ad eum locum venerat, ut falsum iurando deciperet, compulsum fuisse confiteri furtum et, quod abstulerat, reddere. numquid non et Africa sanctorum martyrum corporibus plena est? et tamen nusquam hic scimus talia fieri. sicut enim, quod apostolus dicit, non omnes sancti dona habent curationum nec omnes habent diiudicationem

The tone seems different here. Augustine is no longer denying the occurrence of miracles but asking, almost even with some disappointment, why they do not — conveniently — happen in Africa now that he needs one. This letter is further evidence of the corner turned in Augustine's thinking about miracles after 400. As we see in his cautious phrasing however — he again consistently speaks of 'places' where miracles happen, not of saints playing a role in them, and of what is 'divinely shown forth' — he is not attributing anything specifically to the martyr himself but only to God. As will be seen, this would in effect remain his position, also after the tidal wave of miracles associated with Stephen's relics had reached his city.

This position is evident too in the treatise he sent to Paulinus almost twenty years later, around 422, to answer, with some reluctance, the latter's question whether or not burial near a saint's tomb would benefit the dead. It must have severely disappointed its recipient. For pointing to the fate of exposed Christian bodies after the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410, Augustine says that God ensures every one of them a secure place in heaven — but only if their life has been such as to deserve this. Thus, although it is a familial and pious duty to show respect and care for the dead, prayers for them do not give them a heavenly place unless their lives have deserved it and are essentially a comfort only to the living. Physical proximity to a dead saint's body also does not help the living because it is his soul which is alive and in a peaceful place in heaven. Burial near the saints will, however, help the living to remember the dead — although they can also pray for them without this proximity. (We should remember here that Augustine's mother was buried in far-away Ostia.) As for the care of the dead for the living, Augustine says, poignantly, that if they did know about what happens on earth and could appear in dreams to do something about it, he would certainly have heard from his dead mother who had always surrounded him with her care and even followed him to Milan. With some examples he also posits that dreams and visions of the dead, as well as of the living, are not of the persons themselves but of their images only, perhaps sent by demons or angels, while they themselves are likely to know nothing about it.¹¹¹

He admits, however, that with regard to the saints there can be exceptions to this; by this time, he has evidently accepted the notion that the martyrs may be in some way involved in what happens at their shrine:

For we have heard, not through uncertain rumours but from reliable witnesses, that the confessor Felix, whose lodgings you piously honour, has manifested himself not only through

spirituum, ita nec in omnibus memoriis sanctorum ista fieri voluit ille, "qui dividit propria unicuique, prout vult".

¹¹¹ On Augustine and dreams, see Dulacy, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de Saint Augustin*.

the effects of his benefactions, but even by letting himself be seen when Nola was besieged by the barbarians [in 410].¹¹² These divinely manifested things are far removed from the normal order [of actions] allotted to different kinds of creatures. [...] thus we should understand that the involvement of martyrs in the affairs of the living is due to the power of God, for the dead are not able to act in the affairs of the living through their own nature.¹¹³

That said, Augustine confesses that he does not know how this happens:

Nevertheless, this matter exceeds my mental powers, in what manner they assist those who are certainly helped: whether they themselves are present at the same moment in various places very far apart, and in their shrines or outside them, wherever their presence is felt. Or whether they are themselves in a place congruent to their merits, far from all communication with mortals, but engaged in a general intercession for the needs that prompt people to pray. [...] Or whether the almighty God, who is present everywhere, neither palpable for us nor far removed from us, listens to the prayers of the martyrs and, through the service everywhere of the angels, gives people the comfort he wishes them to have in the misery of earthly life. And whether, through his miraculous and inexpressible power and goodness, he in this way brings the merits of his martyrs to people's attention when he wills and where he wills, especially through their shrines. For he knows that this helps to build up our faith in Christ, for whose confession they gave their lives [...]. The matter is too deep for me to be able to reach, and too abstruse for my investigative capacity. And which of the two possibilities is the true one, or whether perhaps both are correct — so that these things sometimes happen through the presence of the martyr himself and sometimes through angels' presenting themselves as the martyrs — I do not dare decide.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Mentioned also in Augustine, *Civ. dei*, I. 10, lines 57–65, CCSL, 47, pp. 11–12.

¹¹³ Augustine, *De cura*, XVI. 19, CSEL, 41, pp. 652, lines 12–18, p. 653, lines 12–15: 'Non enim solis beneficiorum effectibus, verum ipsis etiam hominum aspectibus confessorum adparuisse Felicem, cuius inquilinatum pie diligis, cum a barbaris Nola obpugnaretur, audivimus non incertis rumoribus, sed testibus certis. verum ista divinitus exhibentur longe aliter, quam sese habet usitatus ordo singulis creaturarum generibus adtributus. [...] intellegendum est, quod per divinam potentiam martyres vivorum rebus intersunt, quoniam per naturam propriam vivorum rebus interesse non possunt.'

¹¹⁴ Augustine, *De cura*, XVI. 20, CSEL, 41, pp. 653, lines 16–22, p. 654, lines 2–17: 'Quamquam ista quaestio vires intellegentiae meae vincit, quemadmodum opitulentur martyres his, quos per eos certum est adiuvare: utrum ipsi per se ipsos adsint uno tempore tam diversis locis et tanta inter se longinquitate discretis, sive ubi sunt eorum memoriae sive praeter suas memorias, ubicumque adesse sentiuntur, an ipsis in loco suis meritis congruo ab omni mortalium conversatione remotis et tamen generaliter orantibus pro indigentia supplicantum [...] deus omnipotens, qui est ubique praesens nec concretus nobis nec remotus a nobis, exaudiens martyrum preces, per angelica ministeria usquequaque diffusa praebeat hominibus ista solacia, quibus in huius vitae miseria iudicat esse praebenda, et suorum martyrum merita ubi vult, quando vult, quomodo vult, maximeque per eorum memorias, quoniam hoc novit expedire nobis ad aedificandam fidem Christi, pro cuius illi confessione sunt passi, mirabili atque ineffabili potestate ac bonitate commendat. res est haec altior, quam ut a me possit adtingi, et abstrusior, quam ut a me valeat perscrutari. et ideo quid horum

Although he then still does not seem to know about those miracles ostensibly then already happening in the north African cities of Calama and Uzalis, where his friends are bishops, this is his mature view of the new miracles in general; as will be seen in 426, after describing the miracles then — finally — happening also in Hippo, he would say something very similar. Compared with what will be seen to be the naively described experiences in the Uzalis collection, it is a reflective and intellectual position. Augustine concludes the treatise with a for Paulinus disheartening sentence about burial near the shrine: 'it seems to me that this benefits the dead person only in that it increases the affection with which he is prayerfully recommended to the martyrs' protection'.¹¹⁵ What becomes clear in these two documents is that Augustine cannot imagine the immutable God acting other than he always has, directly or through his angels, and that this must also be an essential element in the Church Father's long-time resistance to the — formerly pagan — idea of a divinized former human being somehow effecting a miracle.

Alongside Augustine's philosophical turn of mind and his image of an immutable God acting only through angels, then, his disgust with the Donatists' vaunting of their visions and miracles to prove their own — in his view, misguided — holiness contributed towards his long-time unwillingness to publicly recognize what his later writings may indicate to have been at least some contemporary private cures in his vicinity and to hold up interior conversion to his community as the only true contemporary miracle. In the early 420s however, although still not recognizing any miracles at martyrs' shrines in Africa, he does admit to their happening elsewhere.

The Metaphysics and Theology of Biblical Miracles

Biblical miracles are a different story. Augustine's theoretical considerations about these ancient miracles give an insight into his view of the nature of the phenomenon itself that does not emerge in what we have seen him say about contemporary ones. In the first three decades after his ordination, he was led to speculate about the nature and place of biblical miracles in the metaphysics of the Creation in his *On the Trinity* (399–419) and in *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* (401–14);

durorum sit, an vero fortassis utrumque sit, ut aliquando ista fiant per ipsam praesentiam martyrum, aliquando per angelos suscipientes personam martyrum, definire non audeo.

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *De cura*, XVIII. 22, CSEL, 41, p. 659, lines 6–8: 'hoc tantum mihi videtur prodesse defuncto, ut commendans eum etiam martyrum patrocinio affectus pro illo supplicationis augeatur'.

some of this reappeared in the earlier books of the *City of God* (413–26).¹¹⁶ From 407 to 417/18, he explained the theological import of miracles in his sermons on the Gospel of John,¹¹⁷ and it is theology rather than metaphysics that prevails in his discussions of miracle in the later books of his *City of God*. In this section we will touch upon the main points of his thought about the metaphysical and theological aspects of miracle in general, since these must have formed the background of his views of contemporary ones.

In contrast to their theological function, the ontological place of miracles in creation — do miracles occur within created nature or are they purely divine? — appears to have remained a question which, not surprisingly, he felt unable to fully resolve. In the course of his writings, he formulated his views in different ways according to the context in which the subject is discussed, without the presuppositions and ramifications involved always being made explicit. Thus his commentary *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* has been characterized by some of its modern editors as ‘aporetic’, containing ‘multiple hypotheses, incessant hesitations and long discussions to reach rare definite options’, as well as ‘frequent backward turns upon questions that had already seemed resolved’.¹¹⁸ That Augustine himself was well aware of this quality appears from what he says about it in his *Reconsiderations*: ‘in [this] work more was sought than found, and of those things that were found, fewer could be confirmed, the rest being presented in such a way that they must be further explored’.¹¹⁹

This tentative quality, combined with what looks like differing, contextual, uses of the term ‘nature’ as well as his gradually expanding view of the forces possibly at work in miracles, has given rise to different modern assessments of his overall stance or mature thought on the phenomenon of miracle in general. De Vooght (1938) has the most comprehensive view; he understood Augustine to mean that miracles as extraordinary events are within nature as being the whole of creation and that they occurred through a divine intervention that *either activated causal patterns which he had placed in visible nature at its creation in a new way or operated*

¹¹⁶ Dates of *On the Trinity*: Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 184; Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 742. Dates of *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*: Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 184; Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 742. Dates of *The City of God*: Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 743.

¹¹⁷ Dates: Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 282; Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 743.

¹¹⁸ Note complémentaire 1. ‘Le Caractère aporétique du *De Genesi ad litteram*’, in *Oeuvres de saint Augustin*, ed. by Agaësse and Solignac, p. 575; n. 21, p. 658.

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *Retractationes*, II. 24. 1, lines 8–11, CCLSL, 57, p. 109: ‘In quo opere plura quae sita quam inventa sunt, et eorum quae inventa sunt pauciore firmata, cetera vero ita posita, velut adhucquirenda sint.’

*through metaphysical patterns hidden in the divine mind.*¹²⁰ Felice M. Brazzale (1964) emphasizes Augustine's conception of miracle as above all a religious phenomenon, caused by God's divine government *activating in an extraordinary way causal patterns already inserted* in a 'nature' that comprises all of creation; a divinely caused miracle, then, is in fact no more extraordinary than the regular course of things.¹²¹ John A. Mourant (1973) thereafter interpreted Augustine to mean that although miracles may occur with visible nature as a material base, *created patterns are never involved* and their sole cause is God's grace.¹²²

The latter resembles the position of the most recent writer on the subject, Leopold Tanganagba (2002). He argues that Augustine's position is consistent throughout his writings and accords with the modern Catholic definition of miracle in similarly distinguishing three kinds of phenomena in nature: 'ordinary' ones following the usual course of things, 'marvelous' ones 'which he [Augustine] intentionally calls *mirabilia*' that astonish but which — presumably meaning today, but this is not made explicit — 'can be scientifically explained', and *miracula*, 'phenomena whose *causal reasons are not placed in matter [...] but remain hidden in God's will*'.¹²³ In the third book of *On the Trinity*, Augustine indeed appears to say something like this when he distinguishes three orders of things: those that are done corporally in the most usual course of time within the order of the nature of things, such as the rise and fall of stars and the seeds of things; those in that same order that are rare, such as eclipses, earthquakes, and monstrous births; and, finally, all those whose first and supreme cause can only be the will of God.¹²⁴ As we saw, however, Augustine not only uses the terms *mirabilia* and *miracula* interchangeably, and as will be seen regards the whole creation as inherently miraculous, but assumes that demons and angels are often also at work (at God's behest) in extraordinary phenomena. Most importantly, he does not posit what he appears to understand as a self-functioning natural sphere as essentially separate from a supernatural one, as Tanganagba here appears to do.

There is some support in Augustine's statements for each of the positions of Brazzale, Mourant, and Tanganagba; however, their use of the modern meaning of the term 'nature' to apply to Augustine's rather inconsistent use of it seems to cause some confusion. De Vooght's position seems to me to be well founded. For

¹²⁰ De Vooght, 'Notion philosophique', pp. 338, 343.

¹²¹ Brazzale, *La dottrina del miracolo in S. Agostino*, p. 84.

¹²² Mourant, 'Augustine on Miracles', p. 121.

¹²³ Tanganagba, *Miracle comme 'argumentum fidei'*, p. 102 (emphasis added).

¹²⁴ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, III. 8. 19, lines 74–75, CCSL, 50, p. 145.

my own non-expert impression of the evidence is that while Augustine has a consistent and clear view of the theological import of miracles, he was too conscious of his human cognitive limitations to develop a confident view of their metaphysics. Accordingly, in the last book of the *City of God*, Augustine simply admits he does not know precisely how the new miracles through the saints happen but accepts them as proving the truth of the Christian faith. Staying as close as possible to his own words, I shall present, as closely as possible in chronological order, what seem to be the main nodes in his search for a general concept of miracle that would accord with Scripture on the one hand and with his reading and personal experience on the other. The first part of this section will thus present his main ontological probes about biblical miracles, while the second part will treat his more consistent view of their theological import.¹²⁵

‘The Highest Law of Nature’

The Old Testament posited a personal Creator who continued to govern all events, natural and human, and from time to time helped or communicated with men by deviations from the usual patterns that were understood to be signs of his pleasure or displeasure.¹²⁶ In Plotinus’s writings, however, Augustine had found a view of the world as ‘a great chain of being’: the highest principle in the intelligible world necessarily and impersonally shaping the lower levels in the visible world according to its image through transmitting its *spermatikoi logoi* (seed-like reasons or causes), patterns of energy that themselves in turn shaped lower levels of reality.¹²⁷ In such a deterministic view, there was no place for a miracle. Graeco-Roman writings on natural phenomena, on the other hand, had displayed considerable interest in — but no objective or theoretical inquiry into — what were regarded as natural marvels, some of which are now recognized as misunderstood phenomena (such as flies being ‘spontaneously generated from’ organic waste).¹²⁸ Whereas the pagans

¹²⁵ I have found Notes complémentaires 21 (‘Le double moment de la création et les “raisons causales”’) and 29 (‘L’homme formé du limon et les raisons causales’), in *Oeuvres de saint Augustin*, ed. by Agaësse and Solignac, pp. 653–68, 685–90, respectively, very helpful.

¹²⁶ Ross, ‘Some Notes on Miracle in the Old Testament’.

¹²⁷ Notes complémentaires 21A, BA, in *Oeuvres de saint Augustin*, ed. by Agaësse and Solignac, pp. 654–57. See also Mourant, ‘Augustine on Miracles’, pp. 108–13.

¹²⁸ Mentioned by Augustine in *De Trinitate*, III. 9. 17, CCSL, 50, p. 140; cf. on this theme Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*.

attributed some of these signs to their gods, Augustine saw them as performed by his God, but in various possible ways.

Although, in the Bible, God is presumed to act directly, in book four of Augustine's *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* — written 412–14¹²⁹ — he says that much of nature functions through 'numerous reasons (*rationes*), woven in an incorporeal way into corporeal things', that govern their particulars and development.¹³⁰ These were created according to archetypes (resembling Plotinus's Ideas) in the divine Wisdom or Word, first virtually, in the primordial elements out of which the world was created, and then as invisible patterns, causes, reasons, or seeds (*causales rationes, occulta semina*) inserted into matter.¹³¹ Material seeds are their visible manifestation. Through these, Augustine writes in the third book of his *On the Trinity*, written in the same period,¹³² 'the divine will spreads itself through all things in certain most orderly patterns of created movement (*quibusdam ordinatissimis creaturae motibus*), first spiritual then corporeal, and it uses all things to carry out the unchanging judgement of the divine decree'.¹³³ Instead of a deterministic universe, functioning through impersonally and necessarily transmitted self-functioning models, as Plotinus had presented it, Augustine thus conceived of all of creation as functioning through patterns that were freely created as well as constantly maintained and directed by the all-powerful and omnipresent God.

It is when he treats of how Pharaoh's magicians, with the collusion of evil spirits or angels, can do similar things — only, however, with God's permission — that Augustine again turns to the invisible 'seeds' or seminal reasons in things. For evil angels too,

with their finer senses and more volatile bodies they perceive the seeds of things that are hidden from our gaze, and scatter them secretly among suitable combinations of elements, and so seize the opportunity to bring things to birth and accelerate their growth in novel ways.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, p. 638.

¹³⁰ Augustine, *De Gen.*, IV. 33, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 133, lines 7–8: 'numerosae rationes incorporaliter corporeis rebus intextae'.

¹³¹ Cf. Note complémentaire 21B, in *Oeuvres de saint Augustin*, ed. by Agaësse and Solignac, pp. 657–68, especially pp. 658–63.

¹³² Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, p. 638.

¹³³ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, III. 4. 9, lines 9–12, CCSL, 50, p. 135: 'inde se quibusdam ordinatissimis creaturae motibus primo spiritalibus deinde corporalibus per cuncta diffundit et utitur omnibus ad incommutabile arbitrium sententiae suae'.

¹³⁴ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, III. 7. 13, lines 63–67, CCSL, 50, p. 141: 'pro subtilitate sui sensus et corporis semina rerum istarum nobis occultiora noverunt et ea per congruas temperationes

Augustine concludes that he cannot know what angels can and cannot do by their nature, saying that it is impossible to ascertain this except by the God-given discernment of spirits.¹³⁵

In *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he reiterates that water turning instantly into wine at the wedding in Cana and Moses's rod instantly turning into a serpent is the atemporal God's simply choosing to accelerate the usual time-bound course of grape-growing and wine-making and of serpent formation (John 2. 9 and Exodus 7. 10, respectively). He concludes: 'it appears therefore that [these patterns] were created as able to act in both ways, either in that way in which they usually take time, or in the way in which rare and miraculous events take place, as it pleases God to perform what suits the moment'.¹³⁶

In his early treatise *Against Faustus*, written in 397/98 or 400–02,¹³⁷ however, Augustine had posited a more inclusive concept of nature when he replied to the Manichee's assertion that Christ's miracles seem utterly incredible, saying:

We do not deny that what is commonly said to be against nature is against the usual course of nature known by us mortals. [...] But God, the Creator and Author of the natures of all things does nothing against nature, for whatever is done by him, who has instituted all modes, numbers, and courses of nature, must be a natural thing. [...] But we not incongruously say that God does something against nature when what he does is against that which we know of nature. For we call nature that usual course of nature which we know; when God does something against this, [these events] are called great and wondrous works. But against the highest law of nature, [a notion] far removed from the knowledge of unbelievers and those up to now weak [in faith], God never acts any more than he acts against himself. The more fully a spiritual and rational creature, to which species the human soul too belongs, is made to participate in this unchangeable law and light, the more he sees what is possible and what is not possible; the farther he is removed from it, the less will he discern what can happen and thus be astonished at unusual events.¹³⁸

elementorum latenter spargunt atque ita et gignendarum rerum et accelerandum incrementorum praebent occasiones'.

¹³⁵ I Corinthians 12. 10. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, III. 8. 18, lines 54–58, CCSL, 50, p. 145.

¹³⁶ Augustine, *De Gen.*, VI. 14, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 189, lines 16–19: 'restat ergo, ut ad utrumque modum habiles creatae sint, sive ad istum, quo usitatissime temporalia transcurrunt, sive ad illum, quo rara et mirabilia fiunt, sicut Deo facere placuerit, quod temporis congruat'.

¹³⁷ Respectively: Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 184, and Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, p. 742, versus Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, p. 638.

¹³⁸ Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, XXVI. 3, CSEL, 25, pp. 251–797 (p. 730, lines 24–26, and p. 731, lines 4–7, 15–27): 'Dici autem humano more contra naturam esse, quod est contra naturae usum mortalibus notum, nec nos negamus. [...] deus autem creator et conditor omnium naturarum nihil contra naturam facit; id enim erit cuique rei naturale, quod ille fecerit, a quo est omnis modus,

Here, then, whatever God does and potentially can do is said to be 'nature' according to patterns not fully known to humankind that constitute 'the highest law of nature' and include those for miracles. According to this definition, the more pious one is the less one is surprised at what God can do in his creation.

Book nine of *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* was written in 412–14,¹³⁹ when Augustine was beginning to be involved in a controversy about the roles of free will and grace in human salvation.¹⁴⁰ After having once more described 'naturae usitatissimus cursus' (the usual course of nature) according to 'naturales leges' (natural laws), Augustine speaks of what seems to be another dimension, saying,

above/beyond this movement and natural course of things the Creator's power has in it the power to make something other [come forth] from all these [creatures] than what they are capable of according to their seed-like reasons, as it were, not however something which he has not placed in them so that he himself might be able to do this.¹⁴¹

That a cut piece of wood would suddenly flower without earth and water, however, presupposes that God gave this possibility 'in another way, so that they do not have this in their natural movement but in him, by whom they were so created that their nature might be more amenable to a more powerful will'.¹⁴²

The next paragraph shows that what Augustine now means is not an acceleration in the created invisible 'seed-like' cause itself that is inserted in created 'nature', but a separate receptivity to the divine will that included the possibility

numerus, ordo naturae. [...] sed contra naturam non incongruae dicimus aliquid deum facere, quod facit contra id, quod novimus in natura. hanc enim etiam appellamus naturam, cognitum nobis cursum solitumque naturae, contra quem deus cum aliquid facit, magnalia vel mirabilia nominantur. contra illam vero summam naturae legem a notitia remotam sive inpiorum sive adhuc infirmorum tam deus nullo modo facit quam contra se ipsum non facit. spiritalis autem eademque rationalis creatura, in quo genere et anima humana est, quanto amplius illius incommutabilis legis lucisque fit particeps, tanto magis videt, quod fieri possit quidve non possit; quanto autem remotior inde fuerit, eo magis miratur insolita, quo minus cernit futura.'

¹³⁹ Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, p. 638.

¹⁴⁰ See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. 340–64, and Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, pp. 457–86.

¹⁴¹ Augustine, *De Gen.*, X. 17, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 291, lines 20–23: 'super hunc autem motum cursumque rerum naturalem potestas creatoris habet apud se posse de his omnibus facere aliud, quam eorum quasi seminales rationes habent, non tamen id, quod non in eis posuit, ut de his fieri vel ab ipso possit'.

¹⁴² Augustine, *De Gen.*, IX. 17, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 292, lines 11–14: 'alio modo dedit, ut non haberent in motu naturali, sed in eo, quo ita creata essent, ut eorum natura voluntati potentiori amplius subiaceret'.

of a different kind of effect brought about solely by a divine movement coming in from outside, saying:

For God has within him hidden causes of certain events which he has not inserted into created things, and which he actualizes not by the work of providence by which he supports natures so that they may be, but by that through which he governs, as he wishes, those whom he has created as he wishes. To this also belongs the grace through which sinners are saved. For a nature that is depraved by its own wicked will cannot return [to God] by itself but only by the grace of God, by which it is aided and restored.¹⁴³

Here the subject is not nature as much as human nature. Earlier in book nine, Augustine had clarified the notion of divine government by saying that God rules all of creation in two ways, ‘in naturalibus et in voluntariis motibus’ (through the movements in nature and through those of the will). In this way too, like the farmer or the doctor, ‘he can arrange that something is created in time according to the uncreated principles in the Word of God [i.e. Christ] or through the causality according to those reasons created in the works of the first six days [of Creation]’.¹⁴⁴ Grace, then, belongs in the former category.

In the tenth book of the *City of God*, written in 415–17,¹⁴⁵ much of this returns, with a special effort to convince pagans who blamed the Church’s dereliction of the pagan gods for the destruction of Rome — and, potentially, its empire — by the Visigoths in 410. The Old Testament miracles are remembered as confirming the faith in which they were wrought as contrasted with pagan miracles through the incantations and charms of magic and theurgy: these are pastimes of wicked spirits that prove nothing.¹⁴⁶ In various other places, Augustine felt compelled to refute the accusation of some pagans that Christ’s miracles were done by means of such manipulations and that there even existed a document in which these were listed and explained; his argument against this was that Christ’s miracles had been foretold by the prophets and as such could not be other than divine truth.¹⁴⁷ The

¹⁴³ Augustine, *De Gen.*, IX. 18, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 292, lines 15–20: ‘Habet ergo deus in se ipso absconditas quorundam factorum causas, quas rebus conditis non inseruit, easque inplet non illo opere providentiae, quo naturas substituit, ut sint, sed illo, quo eas administrat, ut voluerit, quas, ut voluit, condidit. ibi est gratia, per quam salvi fiunt peccatores.’

¹⁴⁴ Augustine, *De Gen.*, IX. 15, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 288, lines 8–9, 12–15: ‘ut secundum illas principales in verbo Dei non creatas vel secundum illas in primis sex dierum operibus causaliter creatas rationes aliquid tempore creetur’.

¹⁴⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 282.

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, X. 8–11, CCSL, 47, pp. 280–86.

¹⁴⁷ As in Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, XII. 45, CSEL, 25, p. 374, lines 15–25.

martyrs and saints, too, whose souls had been purified through their acceptance of Christ, conquered the evil spirits of the air not by stratagems but by true piety, exorcizing and not propitiating them, and praying to God for help.¹⁴⁸

In book twenty-one — written in 426/27 when he must already have known about the miracles in his city — Augustine defends the possibility of bodies burning in hell without being consumed by pointing to other natural marvels, some of which are effected by spirits, that seem to defy all expectations of nature but are nevertheless true, as proofs of such a thing happening; he concludes that if such marvels are done by unclean demons, how much more powerful must be the angels and God, who made the angels capable of working miracles.¹⁴⁹ It is God's omnipotence that is the final reason for believing his miracles.¹⁵⁰

To those who argue that a thing's nature cannot become different, Augustine adduces the biblical evidence of Adam's body having been immortal before the Fall and mortal after it, and the promise that in heaven there will be a different (spiritual) kind of body again. This is not contrary to nature, Augustine says, 'for how is that contrary to nature which happens by the will of God, since the will of the so mighty Creator is certainly the nature of each created thing?'.¹⁵¹ Here this 'nature' seems to include also the effects of the divine will that occur without involving its 'seed-like' (invisible) causes — being, then, not only its visible regularities and their occasional permutations, but the sum total of its possibilities.

In Augustine's mature view, then, the extraordinary events usually called miracles or prodigies are all acts of an unchangeable and all-powerful God governing 'nature' as the whole of his creation, including human wills, as he wishes. These events can be effected in various ways: either directly or through angelic spirits, through a modification of the created patterns in visible things, or solely through his grace, which — it seems — may also operate according to uncreated patterns in his Wisdom. Sometimes Augustine formulates this in a way that seems to approach the modern physicists' view of a creative Ground actively 'implicate' in all existence:¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, X. 21–22, CCSL, 47, pp. 294–96.

¹⁴⁹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXI. 1–6, CCSL, 48, pp. 758–68.

¹⁵⁰ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXI. 7, lines 32–36, CCSL, 48, p. 769.

¹⁵¹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXI. 8, lines 32–34, CCSL, 48, p. 771: 'quo modo est enim contra naturam, quod Dei fit voluntate, cum voluntas tanti utique conditoris conditae rei cuiusque natura sit?'

¹⁵² As in Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*.

Nature [heals us] by an interior movement that is most hidden from us. However, if God were to withdraw from this movement the intimate working through which he maintains and [continuously] creates it, it would disappear at once and completely.¹⁵³

Nevertheless, Augustine regarded his own various attempts at a metaphysical explanation of the biblical miracles as the tentative speculation that it was and, as will be seen, was sure only about their theological purpose.

‘An Act of the Word Is for Us a Word’

Already in his *On True Religion* (391),¹⁵⁴ Augustine outlined his approach to the Bible and its miracles:

Having abandoned and repudiated theatrical and poetic trifles, let us feed the soul by a consideration and discussion of the divine Scriptures and let us drink — drained and feverish as we are because of the hunger and thirst induced by an empty/vain curiosity and by insubstantial phantasms, as though wishing in vain to be refreshed and filled by pictures of food. Let us be educated in a healthy manner through this free and noble play. If it is the wonders (*miracula*) and beauty of shows that delights us, then let us [develop a] desire to see the wisdom ‘that extends powerfully from one end [of the world] to the other and elegantly rules all things’ [Sapientia (Vulgate) 8. 1]. For what is more wonderful (*mirabilius*) than the incorporeal force that creates and governs the corporeal world? Or what is more beautiful than its ordering and decorating [the world] as well?¹⁵⁵

From the beginning, then, I suggest, Augustine is looking for beauty and wisdom in the wonderful — in fact, miraculous — patterns of an invisible force or power which can be discerned in all that Scripture has to say. Scholars tend to agree about his view of biblical miracles: that natural marvels might occur randomly and wicked spirits might enjoy sporting with illusions, but God’s miracles always have a purpose and

¹⁵³ Augustine, *De Gen.*, VIII. 15, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 288, lines 2–5: ‘Natura id agit interiore motu nobisque occultissimo. Cui tamen si Deus subtrahat operationem intimam, qua eam substituit et facit, continuo tamquam extincta nulla remanebit.’

¹⁵⁴ Dated by Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 74.

¹⁵⁵ Augustine, *Vera relig.*, LI. 100, lines 1–11, CCSL, 32, p. 252: ‘Omissis igitur et repudiatis nugis theatricis et poeticis divinarum scripturarum consideratione et tractatione pascamus animum atque potemus vanae curiositatis fame ac siti fessum et aestuantem et inanibus phantasmatis tamquam pictis epulis frustra refici satiarique cupientem. Hoc vere liberali et ingenuo ludo salubriter erudiamur, “quae pertendit a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suaviter”. Quid enim mirabilius vi incorporea mundum corporeum fabricante et administrante? Aut quid pulchrius ordinante et ornante?’

a message.¹⁵⁶ In what follows I shall look at some of its specifics. As will be seen, he presents the biblical ones explicitly as though they were visible divine 'texts' about Christ and his salvation of mankind that needed to be 'read' to be understood. Not everyone today thinks that this approach does full justice to them.¹⁵⁷ Thus Xavier Galmiche believes that it disregards what he understands to be the essence of a miracle: its sudden blossoming, its creative moment — a view which will be addressed below. We saw indeed that Augustine rejected the 'opening' experience of astonishment as sensation-seeking and therefore not a valid approach to the divine.

His elaborate commentary on the Gospel of John discusses the different didactic functions of miracles a number of times. In the introduction to the eighth homily, after saying that the changing of water into wine should not surprise us since we know that God does this every year through the rain and the vines, he urges a greater attentiveness to the everyday wonder of nature by saying: 'Who can contemplate the works of God, through which he governs and cares for this whole world, without being stunned and overwhelmed by its miracles? [For even] when one considers the power of a single grain of whatever kind of seed, how great a thing it is, awe seizes whoever looks at it.'¹⁵⁸ Awe, then, and not surprise is the right response. In the ninth homily Augustine stresses the doctrinal message in Jesus's miracles, saying that they 'are meant not only to rouse our hearts by miracles but also to build them up in the doctrine of the faith, and therefore they need to be scrutinized by us as to what all these want [to tell us], that is, what they mean'.¹⁵⁹

In the sixteenth homily, however, about the royal official who believed Jesus on his word that his daughter at home would be cured (John 4. 48), Augustine seizes the opportunity to expatiate upon believing without having seen miracles, saying that he and his contemporaries too believe Christ's word in the same way through his Gospel: 'nulla signa vidimus, nulla exigimus' (we see no signs and demand none).¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ See de Vooght, 'Théologie du miracle'; Brazzale, *La dottrina del miracolo in S. Agostino*, pp. 73–76; Mourant, 'Augustine on Miracles', pp. 121–27; and Tanganagba, *Miracle comme 'argumentum fidei'*, pp. 145–76.

¹⁵⁷ See Tanganagba, *Miracle comme 'argumentum fidei'*, pp. 15–19.

¹⁵⁸ Augustine, *Tract.*, VIII. 1, lines 12–14, CCSL, 36, p. 82: 'Quis est enim qui considerat opera Dei, quibus regitur et administratur totus hic mundus, et non obstupescit obruiturque miraculis? Si consideret vim unius grani cuiuslibet seminis, magna quaedam res est, horror est consideranti.'

¹⁵⁹ Augustine, *Tract.*, IX. 1, lines 20–22, CCSL, 36, p. 91: 'non solum valent ad excitanda corda nostra miraculis, sed etiam ad aedificanda in doctrina fidei, scrutari nos oportet quid sibi velint illa omnia, id est, quid significant'.

¹⁶⁰ Augustine, *Tract.*, XVI. 3, line 76, CCSL, 36, p. 167.

It is the beginning of Augustine's twenty-fourth sermon, combining themes from the theological works, that is his most developed and systematic statement on the subject.¹⁶¹ Discussing the miracle of feeding the five thousand with five loaves, he says:

The miracles performed by our Lord Jesus Christ are evidently divine works, and they admonish the human mind about God through visible things. Because he himself is not of such a substance that he can be seen with the physical eyes, and because his miracles, through which he rules the whole world and governs the whole creation, have become familiar through their constant repetition, [...] he has in his mercy reserved for himself something which he does at an opportune time outside the usual course and order of nature, so that by seeing these, not greater but more unusual [events], those who do not value his daily [miracles] might be astonished. Governing the whole world is a greater miracle than stilling the hunger of five thousand men with five loaves, and yet no one wonders [at the former] while men do wonder [at the latter], not because it is greater but because it is less usual. Who, however, even at this very moment feeds the whole world if not the one who created harvests from a few seeds? For he [Christ] did it in his quality of being God. Just as he multiplied the harvests from a few seeds, he multiplied five loaves in his hands. For power is in the hands of Christ: those five loaves were as though seeds, clearly not committed to the earth, but multiplied by the one who created the earth. Something is thus presented to the senses by which the mind is lifted up, and something is exhibited to the eyes upon which the intelligence can be exercised, so that we may admire the invisible God through his visible works and, lifted up to faith and purified by faith, wish to see invisibly the one whom we know from visible things to be invisible.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ See Berrouard, Note complémentaire 32, 'Les Miracles de Christ et leur double fonction religieuse'.

¹⁶² Augustine, *Tract.*, XXIV. 1, lines 1–6, 7–25, CCSL, 36, p. 244: 'Miracula quae fecit Dominus noster Iesus Christus, sunt quidem divina opera, et ad intelligendum Deum de visibilibus admonent humanam mentem. Quia enim ille non est talis substantia quae videri oculis possit, et miracula eius quibus totum mundum regit, universamque creaturam administrat, assiduitate viderunt [...] secundum ipsam suam misericordiam servavit sibi quaedam, quae faceret opportuno tempore praeter usitatem cursum ordinemque naturae, ut non maiora, sed insolita videndo stupeant, quibus quotidiana viderant. Maius enim miraculum est gubernatio totius mundi, quam saturatio quinque millium hominum de quinque panibus; et tamen haec nemo miratur; illud mirantur homines non quia maius est, sed quia rarum est. Quis enim et nunc pascit universum mundum, nisi ille qui de paucis granis segetes creat? Fecit ergo quomodo Deus. Unde enim multiplicat de paucis granis segetes, inde in manibus suis multiplicavit quinque panes. Potestas enim erat in manibus Christi; panes autem illi quinque, quasi semina erant, non quidem terrae mandata, sed ab eo qui terram fecit multiplicata. Hoc ergo admotum est sensibus, quo erigeretur mens, ex exhibitum oculis ubi exerceretur intellectus, ut invisibilem Deum per visibilia opera miraremur, et erecti ad fidem et purgati per fidem, etiam ipsum invisibiliter videre cuperemus, quem de rebus visibilibus invisibilem nosceremus.'

Sensory phenomena, then, are to be analysed by the intelligence to purify the mind so that it can recognize and admire the divine works made visible in them. As will be seen, if Augustine adduces images, they are always presented as leading to abstract patterns or conceptual doctrinal points. Christ's appearing to act freely outside his created patterns (or modifying them), as in miracles, is a wake-up call to men to look for and admire his invisible power operating too in the unnoticed wonders of the usual patterns in the visible world.

In sermon 88 about the two blind men who were healed (Matthew 20. 30–34), Augustine puts this even more forcefully, saying: 'our whole work in this life, brothers, is healing the eye of the heart so that God may be seen'.¹⁶³ The blind men's calling out to Jesus is symbolically equated with the present good Christian's holy life that rejects worldly desires, feeds the poor, and chooses forgiveness over vengeance. The interior eye of those who continue calling in this way, like the two blind men, and ignore the crowd trying to silence and stop them will be healed. When is this interior eye healed? When the divinity of Christ is apprehended by the intelligence in his works while in a temporal human body, when his unchangeable, eternal being is recognized in his transitory acts; and when it is realized that the true light to be seen is not that of the visible sun but that of the interior Sun of Justice.¹⁶⁴ Let all 'call out' (i.e. live the good Christian life in faith), then, so that 'the Wisdom of God and majesty of the Word of God, through whom all things were made, may open your eyes'.¹⁶⁵ The miraculous cure thus becomes a model for an inner awakening. And calling upon Christ for a miracle — as the Donatists were no doubt doing — is quietly transformed into a mute doing of good works that, itself, is said to open the eyes of the heart.

What this means and what 'to see invisibly' means is addressed in two letters.¹⁶⁶ In one, Augustine explains that 'the invisible God is seen invisibly by that nature in us which is also invisible, that is, by the pure mind or heart (*mente vel corde*)'.¹⁶⁷ The coalescence of these two notions appears to show that for Augustine knowledge

¹⁶³ Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 5, lines 128–29, ed. by Verbraken, p. 79: 'Tota igitur opera nostra, fratres, in hac vita est, sanare oculum cordis, unde videatur Deus.'

¹⁶⁴ Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 15, line 408, ed. by Verbraken, p. 90; cf. Malachi 4. 2.

¹⁶⁵ Augustine, *Sermo* 88. 16, lines 411, 413–14, ed. by Verbraken, p. 90: 'ut [...] dei sapientia, et maiestas verbi dei, per quod facta sunt omnia, aperiat oculos vestros'.

¹⁶⁶ Augustine, *Epist.* 147. xv. 37, and 148. ii. 6, CSEL, 44, pp. 312 and 336.

¹⁶⁷ Augustine, *Epist.* 148. ii. 6, lines 14–16, CSEL, 44, p. 336: 'invisibilem deum invisibiliter videri, hoc est per eam naturam, quae in nobis quoque invisibilis est, munda scilicet mente vel corde'.

was not something ‘cold’ but had an affective-spiritual quality. This becomes evident in what he says about seeing love, saying that since just as love, God’s treasure in us, cannot be seen in any spatial way, so also God himself, who is Love, cannot be so apprehended. Whoever remains in this spiritual love, however, remains in God and thereby acquires the lived peace and holiness, or purity of heart, that enables one to ‘see’ or sense him in a direct, suprasensory, aniconic intuition.¹⁶⁸ What Augustine appears to be saying is that one can only affectively recognize something — register and resonate with its ‘vibrations’, as it were — if one’s feelings are already similar to it and thereby participate in it. Here again surfaces the notion of participation through similarity or ‘sympathy’, so pervasive as almost to elude detection.¹⁶⁹

How, then, should Christ’s miracles be ‘read’ so as to ‘purify’ the reader’s heart? Augustine’s model for this process is a verbal and literate one:

Let us ask the miracles themselves what they tell us about Christ — for if they are understood they have their own language. For if Christ himself is the Word of God, an act of the Word is for us a word. This miracle, about which you have heard how great it is, let us seek to find out also how profound it is, so that we not only delight in its appearance but also look closely into its depth. [...] A picture, then, is seen in one way, letters are seen in another. When you see a picture you need only to see it to praise it; when you see letters, that is not all you have to do, for you are admonished to read them as well. [...] Because we have seen and because we have praised, let us [now] read and understand.¹⁷⁰

Each detail of the feeding of the five thousand is thereupon presented as a symbol of one of the mysteries of the faith: ‘there is nothing empty, all things point to something, but they require someone who understands’.¹⁷¹ For instance, the number of the loaves is that of the five books of Moses; the people sitting on the grass point to the saying that ‘all flesh is grass’ (Isaiah 40. 6); and the leftovers are what

¹⁶⁸ Augustine, *Epist.* 147. xvii. 44, CSEL, 44, p. 318, line 12 – p. 319, line 10.

¹⁶⁹ See Hopfner, ‘*Mageia*’, cols 311–15.

¹⁷⁰ Augustine, *Tract.*, XXIV. 2, lines 1–7, 16–19, 26–27, CCSL, 36, p. 244: ‘Interrogemus ipsa miracula, quid nobis loquantur de Christo; habent enim si intelligentur, linguam suam. Nam quia ipse Christus Verbum Dei est, etiam factum Verbi, verbum nobis est. Hoc ergo miraculum, sicut audivimus quam magnum sit, quaeramus etiam quam profundum sit; non tantum eius superficie delectemur, sed etiam altitudinem perscrutemur. [...] Aliter enim videtur pictura, aliter videntur litterae. Picturam cum videris, hoc est totum vidisse, laudasse; litteras cum videris, non hoc est totum, quoniam commoneris et legere. [...] Quia ergo vidimus, quia laudavimus, legamus et intellegamus.’

¹⁷¹ Augustine, *Tract.*, XXIV. 6, lines 1–2, CCSL, 36, p. 246: ‘nihil igitur vacat, omnia innunt, sed intellectorem requirunt’.

the multitude could not grasp, that is, understand.¹⁷² In this visual manner Augustine everywhere explains mysteries of the faith — in fact unrelated to the story at hand — through images in stories that can be remembered by those who cannot read. He adds that those who saw these events were astonished, and the events were written up so that others might hear it read. And 'what their eyes did for them, our faith does for us, for we discern with our soul what we cannot see with our eyes, and therefore we are preferred to them for it is about us that was said: "Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe"'.¹⁷³ Even while praising Christ's miracles as divine signs that need to be understood, then, Augustine manages to make wishing to actually see or experience miracles as such a sign of weakness rather than strength. The eyes of the faithful heart are to see *through* visible things to 'read' — that is, recognize — the invisible patterns informing them; whether they be regular or miraculous ones, they would all lead to an intuition of God's creative love that opens the eye of the heart. And this, not the surprise at or the curiosity about the miracles themselves, should be everyone's central concern.

In his sermons, however, Augustine's treatment of the cure of the woman with the issue of blood gives an active, even initiatory, role to the heart — also the faculty of imagination, although he does not say so — and speaks of it as a spiritual sense organ that can 'touch' spiritual reality.¹⁷⁴ Thus he points to Christ's noticing the difference between her and the crowd jostling around him: 'The Lord said, "Someone touched me", [meaning:] I feel the one touching me more strongly than the whole pressing crowd. The crowd knows how to do the easy pressing; would that it learned how to touch!'¹⁷⁵ What kind of touching is this? In another early sermon, Augustine says:

We do not run to Christ by walking, but by believing; we reach him not by the motion of the body, but by the wish of our heart. Thus the woman who touched the fringe [of his

¹⁷² Augustine, *Tract.*, XXIV. 6, lines 9–12, CCSL, 36, p. 247.

¹⁷³ Augustine, *Tract.*, XXIV. 6, lines 18–22, CCSL, 36, p. 247: 'quod in illis oculi valuerunt, hoc in nobis fides. Cernimus quippe in animo, quod oculis non potuimus, et praelati sumus illis, quoniam de nobis dictum est: "beati qui non vident, et credunt"'. Cf. John 20. 29.

¹⁷⁴ I have treated this theme in Augustine more extensively in my '*Tangere autem corde, hoc est credere*'.

¹⁷⁵ Augustine, *Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti*, Mai XCV. 6, lines 24–25, ed. by Morin, p. 345: 'Ait dominus: TETIGIT ME ALIQUIS: magis sensi unam tangentem, quam turbam prementem. Turba facile novit premere: utinam discat tangere!' Cf. Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, VI. 57, lines 581–82, CCSL, 14, p. 194.

clothing] more truly touched him than the crowd that pressed upon him. [...] What is 'touched' if not 'believed'?¹⁷⁶

The 'wish of the heart' — or desire through the imagination — then opens it to the experience, as it were, and the decision to reach out and actually touch is the confidence that one will find what one seeks. In another sermon, dated to the year 428,¹⁷⁷ Augustine similarly explains that 'touching with the heart, that is believing; for the woman who had touched the fringe, touched with her heart, because she believed'.¹⁷⁸ Sensory touching, then, is accepted but immediately translated into a spiritual act.

Believing here means absolute trust and affective surrender. In another sermon, however, we see that a cognitive element is also necessary. Explaining the risen Christ's saying to Mary Magdalen at the empty tomb that she should then *not* touch him because he had not yet gone up to the Father, Augustine lets Christ say:

You see me, humble, on earth: touch me [now], and you will remain on earth. Touch me [later] as a higher one, believe me to be in heaven, believe in [me as] the only Son and co-equal of the Father; for when you understand me to be equal, then I will ascend for you to the Father.¹⁷⁹

Augustine concludes this sermon, 'Christ will therefore ascend for us and we shall touch him if we believe in him [as divine], for he is the Son of God [...]. Believe [this], and you will have touched [him]. [And] touch [him] in this way, so that you may stay close [to him]'.¹⁸⁰ This kind of 'touching' of Christ as an imaginative act

¹⁷⁶ Augustine, *Tract.*, XXVI. 3, lines 2–5, 8–9, CCSL, 36, p. 261: 'Non enim ad Christum ambulando currimus, sed credendo, nec motu corporis, sed voluntate cordis accedimus. Ideo illa mulier quae fimbriam tetigit magis tetigit quam turba quae pressit. [...] Quid est tetigit nisi credidit?' For Ambrose, however, 'touching' Christ could also be effected through self-mortification: Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, X. 164, line 1563, CCSL, 14, p. 393.

¹⁷⁷ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 428, 516.

¹⁷⁸ Augustine, *Sermo* Guelferbitanus XIV. 2, lines 28–30, ed. by Morin, p. 487: 'tangere autem corde, hoc est credere; nam et illa mulier, quae fimbriam tetigit, corde tetigit, quia credidit'.

¹⁷⁹ Augustine, *Sermo* Guelferbitanus XIV. 2, lines 25–28, ed. by Morin, p. 487: 'Vides me humilem in terra: tangis me, et remanes in terra. Altiozem me tange, in altiozem me crede, in unigenitum Patri aequalem crede; quando enim me intellexeris aequalem, tunc tibi ascendi ad Patrem.'

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, *Sermo* Guelferbitanus XIV. 2, line 34, and 1, lines 5–6, ed. by Morin, pp. 187, 488: 'Ascendat ergo nobis Christus, et tangamus eum, si credamus in eum, quia Filius dei est [...]. Sic credite, et tetigitis. Sic tangite, ut haereatis'; similarly Augustine, *Sermones* 243. ii. 2 and 245. ii. 2, PL, 38, cols 1144[C] and 1152[D].

is completely different from the sensory emptying preceding the 'touching' of the aniconic numinous at Ostia.

But only the holding in the mind-heart of a *true* representation or image of Christ as divine and all-powerful makes it possible to 'touch' or connect to his nature. The unexpressed principle underlying this statement again appears to be that similarity — here, the congruence of the mentally entertained (imagined) notion and the spiritual reality — is the condition for experiencing (contact with) it. But the image of Christ, as the image of the invisible God, is already within man because he was created according to this image (Colossians 1. 15 and Genesis 1. 26–27, respectively). I suggest that, although he does not verbalize it, what Augustine is in effect saying is that the belief in and affective surrender to this, for most people probably imaged, representation of Christ as the visible pattern of all-powerful love will naturally connect with what must be the same, but invisible, 'image' or aniconic pattern in the mind-heart, waiting to be found, recognized, and 'touched'.¹⁸¹ Here, then, Augustine's 'reading' of a sensory event, a miracle, shows — through added imagination — the way inward to a wordless yet in part imagistic communion.

The woman with the issue of blood, however, showed that her trust combined with a physical act could have physical consequences. In an earlier sermon, dated 402–04, Augustine describes her motivation more fully when he adds her expectations to her belief, saying: 'She touched [him] so that what she believed might happen; she did not touch [him] so that she might prove something she did not believe. [...] O touching! O believing! O demanding!'¹⁸² Here touching Christ is done with the expectation of healing. The addition of 'demanding' points to a deliberate strategy, modelled upon Christ's words in the Gospel 'Knock and it will be opened to you' (Matthew 7. 7; Luke 11. 9). If the dating is correct, it must be a spiritual miracle of interior conversion, however, that Augustine is encouraging here. As will be seen, his sermons after the miracles in Hippo had begun to urge those despairing of them to have patience instead, in acceptance of God's inscrutable ways.

Augustine may well be pointing to contemporary physical cures, however, when, in a sermon of 428, he says that the woman 'was cured according to her faith. [...] Grace went out [from Christ], so that she might be healed. [...] We all touch

¹⁸¹ For a modern assessment of the dynamics of meditation, mental imaging, and representation of the invisible through the visible, see Freedberg, *Power of Images*, pp. 161–91.

¹⁸² Augustine, *Sermo Mai* XCV. 6, lines 6–7, 13, ed. by Morin, p. 345: 'Tetigit ut quod credidit consequeretur; non tetigit ut quod non crediderat probaretur. [...] O tangere! o credere! o exigere!'

[him], if we believe'.¹⁸³ What he is here holding out to everyone is that a self-initiated, mentally imaged touch or communion with what must be the interior image of the visible person of Christ as the loving divine Healer may result in his effecting a physical cure.¹⁸⁴ If the dating is correct, this sermon would have been held well after miracles had begun to happen around Stephen's relic in Hippo. We shall see that in Augustine's descriptions of the new miracles after 424, the physical touching of objects that had been near or in contact with martyrs' relics plays an absolutely central role. Mentioning these only in a matter-of-fact way, he may have assumed the physical gesture to be the visible expression of the inner act of believing. Significantly, however, he now accepted sensory touching as incorporated into an act of imagination that could reach the divine. He had travelled a long way since Ostia.¹⁸⁵

Already the title of Xavier Galmiche's *Le Récit de miracle: Oublier Augustin* (1992) rejects what he understands to be Augustine's practice of (mis)treating miracles by regarding them only and purely as 'visible words' or vehicles of verbal doctrine. He pleads for a return to the 'poétique momentanée' (moment of poesis) of the naive miracle story as it is found in the Gospel of Mark: as an event that stands by itself without being deformed to fit into a larger scheme.¹⁸⁶ For in its pure state, Galmiche asserts, a miracle can exhibit spiritual life as 'une présence aussi élémentairement souveraine que celle de la nature' (a presence as fundamentally sovereign as that of nature), which is best transmitted through the coincidence of images and narrative in the medium of film.¹⁸⁷ For Galmiche, Augustine's conceptual analysis and ordering 'kills' the miracle and its moment of 'the emergence of existence'. The 'consubstantial presence' — empathy and compassion — of a literary rendering, however, makes the moment come alive for the reader, 'resuscitates' it, as it were.¹⁸⁸ At another ontological level, he writes, the story of Jesus's resurrection is the paradigm of all miracles in that it shows Love, 'Dieu sans figure'

¹⁸³ Augustine, *Sermo* 245. iii. 3 and iv. 4, PL, 38, cols 1152[D], 1153[A], [C]: 'salva facta essent secundum fidem suam [...] Gratia processit, ut illa sanaretur. [...] Tangamus omnes, si credamus'. For the date, see Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 428, 514.

¹⁸⁴ Ambrose too stressed this theme, as in *Exp. Luc.*, vi. 57, line 580, CCSL, 14, p. 194. Cf. Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, and Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*.

¹⁸⁵ How Augustine's notion of 'touching' the numinous must have changed from the experience at Ostia to the miracles after 424 is traced in de Nie, 'Tangere autem corde, hoc est credere'.

¹⁸⁶ Galmiche, *Le Récit de miracle*, respectively pp. 193, 10–11.

¹⁸⁷ Galmiche, *Le Récit de miracle*, pp. 109, 114–15.

¹⁸⁸ Galmiche, *Le Récit de miracle*, p. 122.

(the aniconic God), trying to awaken — open up — a new world of perpetual resurrection.¹⁸⁹

Augustine's lengthy exegetical passages can certainly seem tiresome rather than inspiring, and his emphatic 'reading' of miracles seems to foreground a purely verbal and cognitive understanding. His purpose, however, as he says very clearly, was to open the eyes of the 'heart' or imagination to 'see' the manner of God's divine love creating and transforming everything, also within oneself — exactly what Galmiche also wants to do. The difference between them is the presentation: for Augustine, as for Ambrose, the understanding of God's mysterious word is itself the bridge to religious experience; for Galmiche (as for Paulinus), this bridge is an imaged moment of affective revelation. We shall see that the fifth-century poet Sedulius presented Christian truths in this way — albeit through verbal images. Nevertheless, Augustine — as his *Confessions* show, always alert to interior divine leadings — was well aware of the awakening moments which Galmiche wants to foreground. He looked beyond them, however, to a more continuous affective experience of 'respirans' (breathing in) God's dynamic patterns that could be maintained by the continuous remembering of his word.¹⁹⁰ Thus he had famously said to God, 'our heart is unquiet until it rests in you'.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Galmiche, *Le Récit de miracle*, p. 127.

¹⁹⁰ Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 7. 16, lines 34–35, CCSL, 27, p. 142. Cf. Pranger, 'Augustine and the Return of the Senses', p. 66.

¹⁹¹ Augustine, *Conf.*, I. 1. 1, lines 6–7, CCSL, 27, p. 1: 'inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te'.



Figure 5. 'Unidentified smiling saint', ivory panel, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.156). Sixth century.
Copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

‘A NEW FACE’: DISCOVERING/DREAMING A SAINT IN EARLY FIFTH-CENTURY NORTH AFRICA

Your Charity, holiest fathers and brothers, will remember well, as I do, that when in the gathering of this our Church of Uzalis, a number of the miracles of our lord Stephen, Christ's first martyr — as they had been truthfully described earlier and proven by public testimony to those of you who were there — were recited from the pulpit, this gift of the utmost gratefulness, procured as we believe by that same Friend of God, was given to your Charity as well: namely that after the recitation of the divine works and deeds, a clear demonstration and personal confession of the very persons in whom these wonders were done, insofar as they could now be found, not only gave witness to [the truth of] our writings, but indeed even poured a faith based upon truth into your eyes and sight. And this happened so that, since these mighty deeds of God were first introduced into your ears through a reading and now made present to your sight through a faith made visible (*oculata fide*), it may be fulfilled in you what is written in the Psalm: ‘As we heard, so we saw’ [Psalm 47. 9 (48. 8)]. For there was an enormous show of heavenly glory in so great a matter.¹

¹ Anonymous, *De miraculis sancti Stephani* [hereafter *Mirac. Steph.*], II. 1, lines 1–16, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 306: ‘Bene mecum recolit Caritas vestra, sanctissimi patres et fratres, quod cum in conventu nostrae huius Uzalensis Ecclesiae nonnulla domini Stephani primi martyris Christi miracula fideliter descripta et publica attestazione comprobata, ante hoc tempus vobis qui adfuistis de pulpito recitarentur, hoc quoque plenissimae gratulationis munus, ipso amico Dei, ut credimus, procurante, Dilectioni vestrae exhibitum, ut post recitationem divinorum operum atque gestorum, ipsarum etiam personarum in quibus illa mirabilia facta, quaecumque in praesenti reperiri potuerunt, demonstratio perspicua et professio propria, non solum scriptis nostris testimonium perhiberent, verum etiam oculis aspectibusque vestris fidem veritatis ingererent. Unde factum est ut, dum ipsae virtutes Dei vestris auribus primitus per lectionem intimarentur et iam visibus vestris oculata fide praesentarentur, illud in vobis quod in Psalmis scriptum est completeretur “Sicut audivimus, ita et vidimus.” Erat quippe in tanta re caelestis gloriae spectaculum grande.’ Cf. Isaiah 35. 2. Other articles in the same volume discuss various aspects of the source and its context. An earlier briefer analysis and still very useful commentary of the text and its historical context is in Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 245–54. Parts of earlier versions of this

In this address to the people, which precedes the second book of the early fifth century collection of *The Miracles of Stephen*, its anonymous author describes the community's reaction to the reading of his first 'book' at the celebration of the martyr's feast. It is an exhilarated thankfulness for events that are understood to make the verbal content of the faith visible in heavenly 'glory': events, once prophesied as accompanying the Lord's ultimate liberation and restoration of his chosen people of Israel, that had now become visible as miracles among his new chosen people, the Christians.

In the last book of Augustine's *City of God*, written in 426, when he speaks of the miracles which have then been happening in his own city since a relic of the martyr Stephen arrived there two years earlier, he mentions that he is having them written up to preserve their memory. And he says that he hopes that this is now also happening around Stephen's relic in Uzalis — about seventy kilometres from Carthage, present-day Tunis, near the present El Aliya² — where his long-time friend Evodius was bishop, and which he had visited two years earlier.³ As already indicated, this coincidence of dates and relics seems to me to point to their connection. As we saw, in 422 Augustine had already accepted the notion of Christian miracles happening elsewhere and seemed almost disappointed not to see them in his own Africa. We can only guess at how he experienced this mind- and heart-changing visit. As will be seen, miracles had been happening in Uzalis since 418. The oral versions of the stories which we are about to examine must be among the ones that convinced him of the miracles' authenticity. This visit could have led to his wishing to acquire a (contact) relic of the martyr for his own city and its being given to him by his friend.

Perhaps, then, produced upon Augustine's urging in the years 424/26,⁴ the anonymous Uzalis text is the oldest surviving independent collection of *prose* stories about miracles at a martyr's shrine in the west.⁵ (Augustine's contemporary notices

chapter have appeared as '*Oculata fides*', and will appear as 'Concordius's Dream-Discovery of a Healing Saint'.

² On the site of Uzalis, see Galia, 'Le Site d'Uzalis'.

³ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII, 8, lines 364–65, CCSL, 48, p. 824. On Evodius, see Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, VII, 42–45, and de Plinval, 'Évode'. His correspondence with Augustine on visions and other subjects is in Augustine, *Epist.* 158–61, 163, 164, 169, CSEL, 44, pp. 488–511, 520–21, 521–41, 611–22.

⁴ About the probable date, see Meyers and others, 'De la découverte des reliques à la composition du *De miraculis*', pp. 22–25. On the contrast between the two sections, see Meyers, 'Citations bibliques dans le *De miraculis*', p. 153.

⁵ Thus Delehaye, 'Recueils antiques de miracles des saints', p. 81. As we saw, Paulinus of Nola's *Natalicia* constituted the first poetic collection.

in 426, which will be examined in the next chapter, are part of a lengthy ongoing treatise.⁶) But the Uzalis collection is also unique in other ways. As contrasted with Augustine's mostly very brief summaries with no discoverable timeline, this collection — although at least in part written years after the facts — professes to narrate the events in some detail exactly as they were told to the author.

In what follows, I shall examine the collection's many dreams and visions, during which almost half of the miracles related are said to have taken place. They show how this community, around what had arrived as uncertain, indeterminate bits of bone and dust, gradually began to envision and depend upon a human figure with a smiling face who could effectively heal, empower, and rescue. As the author presents it, the martyr's wished-for and perceived actions and qualities gradually turned him into a collective focus of loyalty and hope, a unifying force, for the community formerly divided between the Donatists and the Catholics. The image-events in the visions reported offer glimpses of how these people opened their minds and hearts to expect, and actually to experience, miraculous transformations through the newly arrived relic of the already well-known, but up to then faceless, biblical martyr. As one scholar recently put it: 'society [...] invents the saints it needs'.⁷

Dreams and Events

Before tracing this process in Uzalis, however, we will look at how Stephen's remains, hundreds of years after his death, were suddenly discovered in Jerusalem and particles of it came via the island of Minorca to Uzalis — much of this process guided and accompanied by various people's dreams.

'Dust of Flesh and Nerves': The Discovery of Stephen's Remains in Jerusalem

Ambrose's finding and installing the relics of Gervasius and Protasius in 386, and his sermons with their description of the bodies when unearthed and of their power, had been a warning to sceptics and armed enemies.⁸ Bishop Victricius of Rouen's lengthy and learned address *On the Praise of Saints* ten years later had welcomed those

⁶ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, CCSL, 48, pp. 815–27.

⁷ Tilliette, 'Introduction', in *Fonctions des Saints*, p. 5: 'La société [...] fabrique les saints dont elle a besoin'.

⁸ Ambrose, *Epist.* 77 (Maur. 22), CSEL, 82. 3, pp. 126–40.

represented by their relics to his city and developed the first theology of martyrs' remains as still inhabited by Christ and the Holy Spirit, and thereby capable of cures and miracles. He too mentions the city's joy (*gaudia*) at the saints' arrival.⁹ Both of these were expositions by Church leaders praising relics also as a means to civil harmony.¹⁰ Ambrose says nothing about the saints' human appearance, but, as will be seen, what Victricius said about their presumed present appearance in heaven may have influenced the Uzalians. Victricius's treatise, as well as Ambrose's subsequent findings of martyrs' relics in other Italian cities,¹¹ indicates that by the end of the fourth century the cult of the martyrs was on the way to becoming institutionalized in Italy and Gaul. Paulinus of Nola's early fifth-century poetic declamations about the martyr Felix's miracles, also a unifying activity, had imagined the saint's shining face as reflecting that of the transfigured or resurrected Christ as the image of God.¹² It is unlikely, however, that Uzalis's ordinary citizens were familiar with these elaborate poems. As will be seen, they went on to discover the face of their new saint on their own, through dreaming about him.

The stories show that the city had already venerated two, probably local, martyrs¹³ and was aware of the petitional practices around the martyr cult and its miracles elsewhere. If we can believe Augustine, in northern Africa the martyr cult had for a century been appropriated by the Donatists, very much focused upon their own (sometimes doubtful) martyrs' remains and using them as charms, expecting miracles. As we saw, until the formal reconciliation of the two churches in 411, the north African Catholic hierarchy, including Augustine, had resisted these practices and enacted conciliar decrees against them.¹⁴

As for Stephen, there is very little evidence of interest in this martyr in Christian sources until the late fourth century. Then the first trace emerges of non-canonical stories, about his youth and early connections with the Jewish priest Gamaliel, which had perhaps circulated in Palestine during the third and fourth centuries.¹⁵ In 415,

⁹ Victricius, *De laude*, XII, lines 35–42, CCSL, 64, p. 90.

¹⁰ See Moorhead, *Ambrose*, pp. 129–56, and McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 209–19.

¹¹ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 241–42.

¹² See Chapter 3.

¹³ As Duval, 'Monuments du culte d'Étienne à Uzalis', p. 91. For the larger context, see Duval, *Loca sanctorum Africae*.

¹⁴ Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 335–38.

¹⁵ Bovon, 'Dossier on Stephen', pp. 285–90, 303–04, and Bovon, 'Beyond the Book of Acts', p. 96. See also Saxer, 'Aux origines du culte de saint Étienne protomartyr', pp. 37–46.

however, something happened that sent a shock wave throughout the empire: a country priest named Lucian near Jerusalem, while sleeping as usual in his baptistery, received a number of visions 'quasi in ecstasi effectus semivigilans' (as though in a half-waking state of ecstasy).¹⁶ He saw Gamaliel commanding him to unearth the remains of the first and most glorious of all martyrs, Stephen, whose burial site in the vicinity, alongside that of Gamaliel himself and two others, had been forgotten. In his letter describing what happened, Lucian writes that after having received the permission of his bishop, John of Jerusalem,¹⁷ to do so, he went to work and found Stephen's casket alongside the others. The Bishop with two of his colleagues, as well as a large crowd of people, were present when it was opened. Lucian writes:

at once there was an earthquake, and such an overwhelmingly sweet odour and fragrance came into [us] from there, more than anyone could remember having heard about or experienced, that we thought we had been transported into the grove of paradise. For there was a multitude of people with us, among which many were afflicted with various diseases. And at that very hour seventy-three souls were cured instantly by the sweet odour. [...] And when we had kissed the holy relics, we closed [the casket] again.¹⁸

The remains themselves are not described. The smelling of a sweet fragrance associated with Paradise — the presumed present abode of the saints — appears to be the contemporary form given to an intense experience of holiness; it looks like the Christianized version of a pagan tradition of fragrance associated with the appearance of their gods.¹⁹ Stephen's remains were installed on the twenty-sixth of December by Bishop John in the Church of Zion in Jerusalem. Lucian writes that he was given 'little pieces [fingerbones?] of the saint's body, the greatest relics, with dust [earth]

¹⁶ [Lucianus presbyter], *Epistola Luciani ad omnem Ecclesiam, de revelatone corporis Stephani martyris primi et aliorum* [hereafter *Epist. Luciani*], 2, PL, 41, col. 809[A]. On this letter, its original language, and related documents, see Vanderlinden, 'Revelation S. Stephani (BHL 7850–6)'; Martin, 'Die *revelatio Stephani* und Verwandtes'; and now Bovon, 'Dossier on Stephen', pp. 294–95, and Bovon, 'Beyond the Book of Acts', pp. 96–99. Cf. Leclercq, 'Étienne (martyre et sépulture de saint)'.

¹⁷ On John, see van Esbroeck, 'Jean II de Jérusalem et les cultes de S. Étienne, de la sainte-Sion et de la Croix'.

¹⁸ *Epist. Luciani*, 8, PL, 41, col. 815[B]: 'statim terrae motus factus est, et tanta suavitas et fragrantia odoris inde ingressa est quantum nullus hominum se meminit vel audisse vel sensisse: ita ut putaremus nos in amoenitate paradisi esse positos. Multitudo namque populi aderat nobiscum, inter quos erant plurimi infirmi variis languoribus. Et ipsa hora mox de odore suavitatis eius septuaginta et tres animae curatae sunt [...]. Et osculantes sanctas reliquias iterum clausurunt.'

¹⁹ See Kötting, 'Wohlgeruch der Heiligkeit'.

from where his flesh was dug up; the rest they took away'.²⁰ It appears to have been part of these relics — as will be seen, described very differently — that eventually came to Uzalis. For Lucian, who had accompanied his bishop to a church council in Lydda-Diospolis that year, gave some of what he had of Stephen's relics to the priest Avitus there, who in turn gave them to the Spanish priest Orosius, present on Augustine's behalf, to take with him on his return journey to Spain for Bishop Balchonius of Braga.²¹ Avitus sent along his own translation into Latin of Lucian's letter, and it is in his accompanying letter to Balchonius that he refers to the martyr as 'advocatus' and 'patronus' and gives another description of his relics as 'dust of flesh and nerves, and what is to be believed more faithfully and with certainty, solid bones — treasures manifesting his sanctity by new colours and fragrances'.²² We shall later offer a suggestion as to what one 'new colour' may have been; the fragrance is presumably that which Lucian had described as of Paradise.

'The Spark from the End of the Earth': Miracles on Minorca

Orosius had intended to set sail for Spain from the island of Minorca. While he stayed there in 416, he placed the relics he was carrying in the church of one of the island's two cities: Magona. Having heard that Spain had been overrun by Germanic tribes, however, he went briefly to Africa and later returned to try again. The invasions there making the journey inadvisable, he returned to Africa, leaving some of the relics in the church at Magona. Since the letter is said to have been read to the community upon their subsequent ceremonial installation in Uzalis, he must also have taken with him the one — dated 2 February 418 — written by Severus, bishop of Minorca.²³ It describes how a few dream visions, apparitions, and turns

²⁰ *Epist. Luciani*, 8, PL, 41, col. 815[C]: 'de membris Sancti parvos particulos, imo maximas reliquias cum pulvere, ubi eius omnis caro absumpta est, caetera asportaverunt'. On attitudes towards the fragmentation of holy remains, see Crook, *Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints*, pp. 21–23.

²¹ Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 245–46.

²² Avitus of Braga (Avitus Bracharensis), *Epistola ad Palchonium*, PL, 41, col. 807[A]: 'pulv[is] carnis atque nervorum, et quod fidelius certiusque credendum est, ossa solida atque manifesta sui sanctitate novis pigmentis vel odoribus pinguiora'; 'advocatus' and 'patronus': col. 806[D].

²³ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 2, lines 39–43, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 274. Severus's letter, *Epistola ad omnem ecclesiam*, ed. by Bradbury as *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, pp. 80–125; the placing of the relics: 4. 2, lines 25–27, ed. by Bradbury, p. 82. The article by Demougeot, 'L'Évêque Sévère de Minorque et les Juifs de Minorque au V^e siècle', was not available to me.

of events that were perceived as miracles that had occurred after the relics had arrived on the island helped to effect the conversion there of the resident Jews, thereby beginning to bring together what had been a bitterly divided community. Again, then, miracles around relics are presented as leading to a healing of pre-existing divisions. The visions and apparitions which Severus reports, however, are all symbolic and many point back to the Old Testament, which of course the Jews would recognize; the saint himself does not appear in any of them. Although, as will be seen, the Uzalis collection echoes some of the motifs in Severus's letter, it is a very different document: Jews are not mentioned at all, it relates many kinds of miracles only a few of which are explicit conversions, and the human image of the saint plays a central role almost from the beginning.²⁴

A brief look at the main events related by Severus's letter, however, will make clear with what kind of introduction Stephen's relics were presented to the citizens of Uzalis. Addressing himself to the clergy of all the churches in the world, the writer begins with the angel Raphael's warning that it is a sin to conceal the works of God (Tobias 12. 20), says he will record the miracles 'communi ac simplici sermone' (in common and simple language), and adds that he will, in this way, 'begin to speak to your blessedness of the great things which Christ did among us, not in a decorated, but in a truthful speaking'.²⁵ Mentioning the island's two cities, Jammona in the west and Magona in the east, he then says that according to an ancient tradition Jammona, where most of the Christians lived, had been granted 'a Deo munus' (as a gift from God) that neither Jews nor 'noxia animalia' (noxious animals) — whose 'ferita[s] atque nequitia' (savageness and wickedness), he says, resembles that of the Jews — were able to live there; if they tried they would fall sick, or die suddenly, or be struck by lightning.²⁶ These invidious symbolic statements seems to show that the proximity of representatives of the group that was responsible for Christ's death and refused to believe in him was experienced as an existential threat. The Christians of the church in Magona, Severus writes, were bitten every day by snakes and scorpions. However, the gift to Jammona had now been spiritually renewed when, 'as is written [Luke 3. 7], that generation of vipers, that

²⁴ For an overview of the kinds of miracles and their spatial relation to the relics, see Duval, 'Culte des reliques en Occident'.

²⁵ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 1, ed. by Bradbury, p. 80, lines 10–13: 'magnalia, quae apud nos Christus operatus est, Beatudine vestrae non compto sed veridico sermone referre aggrediar'.

²⁶ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 3, 1–2, ed. by Bradbury, p. 80, line 28, p. 82, lines 1–5.

was raging with poisoned blows, was suddenly forced by divine power to cast away its deadly poison of unbelief.²⁷ This passage shows how a biblical image — vipers — could influence at least Severus's perception to such a degree that he coalesced it with visible, palpable phenomena; as will be seen, further on in the letter, images seen in a dream vision and in an apparition are likewise interpreted as representing later analogous concrete — power-laden — circumstances, something which the Uzalis author will imitate.

The animal imagery in this severely biased description of the Jews may derive from the notion that the ones who were being combated were not the Jews personally but the hostile demons by whom they were unconsciously possessed. For notwithstanding the evident deep unease at the presence of a group rejecting the Christian faith, as soon as the Jews had converted, they are said to have been embraced in love. The author then says that 'presbyter quidam, sanctitate praecipuus' (a certain priest, outstanding in holiness [this must be Orosius]), coming from Jerusalem, had left some of Stephen's relics, which had recently been revealed, in Magona's church; he adds:

When this had been done, at once that fire, which the Lord comes to cast upon earth and which he wishes to kindle [Luke 12. 49], was lighted by his love. At once, our lukewarmness grew hot and, as is written, our heart was made 'to burn within us' [Luke 24. 32]. For then that faithful zeal began to burn through the rising hope of saving everyone.²⁸

The relics, then, were perceived as the catalyst that precipitated an increased enthusiasm to convert. The result of the new effort was, at first, strife and violence everywhere. As Severus tells it, the Jews were superior in material power and preferred their own magistrate and patron, Theodorus, whereas the Christians, according to Severus superior in spiritual power, prayed to deserve the patronage of Stephen. Meanwhile, two people had dreams. Severus excuses his relating them by pointing to the fact that the apostle Paul's dreams too had been reported in Acts.²⁹ Our Uzalis

²⁷ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 3. 7, ed. by Bradbury, p. 82, lines 17–19: 'ut illa, sicut scriptum est, "generatio viperarum", quae venenatis ictibus saeviebat, subito divina virtute compulsa mortiferum illud virus incredulitatis abiecerit'.

²⁸ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 4. 3–4, ed. by Bradbury, p. 82, lines 28–31, p. 84, lines 1–2: 'Quo facto, protinus ille, quem Dominus "venit mittere in terram" et quem valde ardere cupit, caritatis eius ignis a ccensus est. Statim siquidem tepor noster incaluit, et factum est cor nostrum, sicut scriptum est, "ardens in via". Nunc enim iam illud fidei amburebat zelus, nunc spes salvandae multitudinis erigebat.'

²⁹ Acts 16. 9; Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 9. 1–4, ed. by Bradbury, p. 86, lines 17–30.

author would later introduce many more dreams. Severus reports that among the Christians, a holy virgin named Theodora dreamed that a noble widow — interpreted by Severus as a figure of the Church — donated all her fields to him to be sown. A similar dream showed another noble widow, this time interpreted as the synagogue, also offering her fields to the Bishop for the same reason. Among the Jews, however, their leader Theodorus dreamed that when he wished to enter the synagogue, he was stopped by twelve men asking him where he was going, since 'leo illic est' (the Lion is there). What he in fact saw there, however, was a choir of monks 'mira suavitate psallentes' (singing [Davidic] psalms with utmost sweetness).³⁰ The author explains that this Lion was, of course, David, presumably presenced through the singing of his psalms. The allusion seems to be to the image in Revelation 5. 5 in which 'the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David' is said to be able to open the scroll sealed with seven seals that will initiate the end of the present world. If so, it is an indication that the author and his audience are perceiving their time and its events in an apocalyptic context, and this would justify their zeal to convert the Jews to hasten its accomplishment. The symbolic figure of the Lion and its visible representation (the singing monks) recur as visible events later in the letter.

Bishop Severus then went to Magona to attempt to convert the Jews. When they rejected his invitation to come to the church, he proceeded to go to the synagogue, taking his clergy with him singing psalms in the streets (implicitly presencing the Lion) — the Jews said to be singing along with them. Certain Jewish women, however, threw stones at the procession from a tall building; after a struggle at the synagogue ended in its being consumed by fire, Severus and the Christians returned to their church singing hymns of thanks to God for destroying 'perfidiae antra' (the cave of perfidy).³¹ Thereafter the Christians attempted to persuade Theodorus; having first implored divine help, they shouted with one voice: 'Theodore, crede in Christum' (Theodorus, believe in Christ!). This precipitated what Severus calls a miracle (*miraculum*): God himself 'transformed the import of this shouting in the ears of the Jews';³² for they thought they heard that Theodorus had already converted and fled in terror. And Theodorus himself too fled, persecuted not by the Lion, as in the dream vision, but by the sound of the monks' singing, 'quo

³⁰ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 11. 1–4, ed. by Bradbury, p. 88, lines 17–28.

³¹ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 14, ed. by Bradbury, p. 94, lines 24–25.

³² Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 16. 4–6, ed. by Bradbury, p. 96, lines 12–18: 'Ipse enim virtutem clamoris huius in auribus Iudaeorum commutavit'.

resistentes tremefecit inimicos' (by which resisting enemies are made to tremble).³³ The phrase appears to point to this singing (understood by the author and perhaps Theodore himself as spiritually presencing the Lion) as an invocation to divine power to come to the spot. A friend finally persuaded him to convert. When he had explained his decision to his people, Severus writes, they joined him in his request to Severus to be baptized.

He reports that on the day that many of the Jews were joyfully accepted into the church, prodigies were seen in the sky. While Mass was being celebrated in the church where the relics were, two monks working in the field saw an approximately man-sized sphere of brilliant light slowly descend to the church and enter it. Elsewhere, women saw it too. Severus says that it was not certain whether this was an angel or Stephen himself.³⁴ Just before this, hail had come down from the sky that tasted sweet; it was perceived to be a new manna.³⁵ Severus explains that this manna and the sphere, which he assimilates to the pillar of fire, similar to the circumstances in which the Jews were once liberated from captivity in Egypt, now indicated that Jews all over the world were being illumined and liberated by the light of faith.³⁶ These 'signs' later also convinced a few who had held out. One woman, however, who could not be moved by words or by miracles was later converted in church, after divine help to effect this had been asked in simultaneous ways: by the clergy's continuous hymn-singing, by 'battles of prayer against Amalek, the enemy of Jesus, our Lord', and by everyone's prostrated weeping — all ritual actions.³⁷ We shall see the first cure in Uzalis being sought with very similar actions and images. When, at the end of the prayer, the people all shouted 'Amen', the lady too said she believed and wished to become a Christian. A week later, when someone else fell at the Bishop's knees and asked to be taken in together with his family, Severus asks rhetorically: 'who did not then weep for joy?'³⁸ This phrasing too

³³ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 16. 10, ed. by Bradbury, p. 98, line 5.

³⁴ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 20. 6–12, ed. by Bradbury, p. 110, lines 31–33, p. 112, lines 1–15.

³⁵ As in Exodus 16.

³⁶ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 20. 13–20, ed. by Bradbury, p. 112, lines 15–31, p. 114, lines 1–9. Cf. Exodus 13. 21–22, 16. 14–15.

³⁷ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 27. 5–7, ed. by Bradbury, p. 120, lines 16–25: 'orationem proeliis adversus Amalech hostem Iesu ducis nostri'.

³⁸ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 28. 8, ed. by Bradbury, p. 122, line 7: 'Quis non prae gaudio flevit?'

recurs in the Uzalis collection.³⁹ After Easter had been celebrated, Severus — alluding to the first dream vision — says that he saw the field, having been cleared of the weeds of unbelief and been sown with the seed of the Word, sprouting the manifold fruit of justice. He tells us that the Jews helped not only to remove the foundations of the burned synagogue but also to finance, and even to build with their own hands, a church in its place. He ends his letter by regarding all these events as indications that Christ's return was near:

Perhaps that time predicted by the Apostle has now already come in which all the nations having entered [the Church], all of Israel too is saved [Romans 11. 25]. And perhaps the Lord wished to set alight the spark from the end of the earth [i.e. Minorca], so that the whole world may burn with the fire of love to consume the forest of unbelief.⁴⁰

As the letter's editor points out, the fire is a two-faced phenomenon: as love it embraces, but at the same time, as at the end of the world, it devours and consumes what is inimical to it; and Severus has dressed up with symbolic imagery and visions a violent course of action that was contrary to accepted practice at the time.⁴¹ Again, then, a relic's benign heavenly power is perceived, or at least presented, as a new focus of inspiration and loyalty that — albeit only after a great deal of violence — is said to have inspired harmony in a conflicted city. The fact, however, that a friend thereafter produced a treatise with useful arguments called *Against the Jews* for Bishop Severus suggests that the discussion was far from over, even then.⁴² As we saw also in connection with Ambrose, sacred rituals such as prostrated praying with tears, and trance-inducing hymn- and psalm-singing, were perceived as presencing the divine, and themselves also helped to sway people's minds and hearts. Although there is no explicit evidence for this, it may have been Orosius himself who, perhaps later that year, brought some parts of the relics to Uzalis, where, as we saw, a long-time friend of his mentor Augustine was bishop. It is possible that Lucian and Avitus's letters reached Uzalis along with Severus's letter, but our source gives no conclusive evidence of this.

³⁹ *Mirac. Steph.*, II.1, lines 33–34, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 308.

⁴⁰ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 31. 3, ed. by Bradbury, p. 124, lines 3–8: 'Forsitan enim iam illud praedictum ab Apostolo venit tempus, ut plenitudine gentium ingressa omnis Israel salvus fiat. Et fortasse hanc ab extremo terrae scintillam voluit Dominus excitari, ut universus orbis terrarum caritatis fl agret incendio ad exurendam infidelitatis silvam.'

⁴¹ Bradbury, 'Introduction', Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, p. 45.

⁴² Bradbury, 'Introduction', Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, p. 72.

'Wishing to Unfold Faithfully the Truth of the Events Themselves': The Uzalis Author's Aims

Turning now to the Uzalis collection of Stephen's miracles, it consists of two sections or 'books', each preceded by what is in fact a prologue. The first book's prologue gives the reasons for writing about the miracles and is followed by seventeen stories of different lengths. The second book's prologue, as we saw an address to the people prior to the reading of its stories, describes the reactions of the church community to the reading of the first book at the martyr's feast; it is followed by five much longer stories that take up about an equal amount of space as the first book. At its end there is a brief epilogue, apologizing for the author's insufficiencies and promising another book about the many miracles that had not yet been written down. If this promise was ever carried out, its result has not come down to us.

The prologue to the first book, addressing the community as though in a liturgical context, begins, as Severus's letter also does, with a quote from the angel Raphael exhorting the publication of the works of God.⁴³ Like Severus, too, our author asserts that 'he will not exaggerate by fancy or language and wishes to unfold faithfully, as far as God will grant this, the truth of the events themselves'.⁴⁴ Accordingly, he will not strive for a show of words but rather avoid the deceit of lies; in fact, he will wherever possible report the words actually said by the persons involved, not blushing at any of their incorrect expressions.⁴⁵ As already indicated, however, internal evidence reveals that — like Severus — our author was well educated, arranged his material purposefully, and did, at times, use certain literary devices.⁴⁶ We shall see that the similarities between the two texts do not stop here. But there are also differences.⁴⁷ In contrast to Severus's confidence that the world

⁴³ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. *Prol.*, lines 3–4, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 266; Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 1, ed. by Bradbury, p. 89, lines 5–7. Cf. Tobias 12. 6–7.

⁴⁴ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. *Prol.*, lines 12–14, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 266: 'nec ingenio et lingua aliquid quasi exaggerare praevalentes, sed ipsarum rerum veritatem, prout Deus donaverit, fideliter explicare cupientes'; cf. Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 1. 1, ed. by Bradbury, p. 80, line 8.

⁴⁵ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. *Prol.*, lines 14–17, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 266: 'ut ipsa nostra narratio non tam verborum pompam audeat quaerere, sed potius mendaciorum fucum studeat declinare, ita ut ubicumque res postulaverit, ipsorum quoque hominum verba, sicut ab eis dicta sunt, simpliciter ponere non debeamus erubescere'.

⁴⁶ Griffé, 'La Langue du *De miraculis*'; Devallet, 'Thèmes et structures du récit'; and Michaud, 'Vérité des faits ou maquillages menteurs dans le *De miraculis*'.

⁴⁷ For a comparison, see *Mirac. Steph.*, I. *Prol.*, ed. by Meyers, p. 267 and n. 4 (p. 356).

will want to know about the events on his island, our Uzalis author is not so sure that the city's stories need to be written up, for they are well enough known in their community and already proclaim themselves by their visible power. He is writing only, the author says, because he has been ordered to do so by his bishop, as well as by Scripture, and so as not to deprive his 'brothers' of the knowledge of the martyr's glory.⁴⁸ As we saw, he appears to have changed his mind in the prologue to the second book, which records the enthusiasm with which the public reading of the first book, its substance confirmed by presenting the subjects of the stories for all to see, was received.

His sputter of resistance may have been to something experienced as an intervention from without: Augustine's possible pressure upon his friend Bishop Evodius to preserve the memory of the miracles in writing.⁴⁹ For, as will be seen in the next chapter, the tidal wave of miracles occasioned by Stephen's relics in Hippo after 424 made Augustine reverse his previous reserved stance and now insist that they should be written up in individual pamphlets (*libelli*) to be read to the community regularly for their edification.⁵⁰ It looks as though Evodius, although outside Augustine's diocese, had obediently appointed our ostensibly reluctant author to make a collection of pamphlets, as it were, about some of the more important miracles. Although there are reminiscences of Augustine's views in the collection's authorial comments, that of incorporating the persuasiveness of pagan rhetoric into Christian preaching is, at least on the surface, not one of them. The author's — perhaps somewhat disingenuous — resistance to rhetoric may be influenced by Sulpicius's stance in his *Life of Martin*, but it has also been associated with a charismatic African tradition hostile to rhetoric that insisted upon miracles themselves as 'tacita praedicatio' (silent preaching), a phrase which occurs in this context in the preface to the second book.⁵¹

As will be seen, the author, like Severus of Minorca, consistently explains and authenticates the miracles as visible fulfilments of Old Testament prophecies and images of the Lord's ultimate salvation of his chosen people, now evidently understood to point to the imminent return of Christ; like Severus's letter too, but in a

⁴⁸ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. *Prol.*, lines 23–24, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 268.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 360–65, CCSL, 48, p. 824. On Augustine and Evodius and this visit, see Lancel, 'Saint Augustin', pp. 69–70.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 25–36, CCSL, 48, pp. 815–16.

⁵¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 1, lines 23–24, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 308. See Griffe, 'La Langue du *De miraculis*', pp. 143–44, and Michaud, '*Vérum et velum*', p. 185.

benign way, the whole collection therefore breathes an apocalyptic expectancy.⁵² As compared to what will be seen to be Augustine's emphasis upon Christ as the active agent, the references to the martyr as intercessor with, and mediator in, what is in fact Christ's action are not conspicuous and frequently implicit.⁵³

Can we regard the stories of the Uzal's visions which we are about to analyse as, in essence, accurate representations of the events? Their author — ostensibly a member of the city's episcopal monastery⁵⁴ — certainly wishes to persuade his intended audience, his own church community, that this is the case. Since, as we have seen, the stories were in fact later read to them on the martyr's feast in the presence of the persons involved, they cannot have deviated greatly from the facts that they and many others would already have known about. The author's awareness of the importance of ostensible details is revealed in his statement that he will present only a selection of the more numerous stories — itself a commonplace in hagiography.⁵⁵ We shall see that he has a clear agenda: the creating of a consensus to accept Stephen as the city's effective heavenly patron. The perceived content of the actual dreams is therefore likely to have undergone more or less subtle modifications, not only in their first telling by the dreamer himself — for dreams rarely present themselves as immediately intelligible stories⁵⁶ — but also in their subsequent interpretation by the clerical authorities. Throughout, it looks as though the dream figures are naively thought to have been actually present, be it in dream or otherworldly landscapes.⁵⁷

⁵² The use of the biblical quotations is discussed and analysed in Meyers, 'Citations bibliques dans le *De miraculis*'. He suggests that this practice may also be understood as a defence of the phenomenon of contemporary Christian miracles as such in the then ongoing discussion about these (p. 149), but in his commentary on the text also speaks of some of the quotations in the author's preface having 'une saveur nettement apocalyptique' (p. 357, n. 6).

⁵³ Meyers, 'Citations bibliques dans le *De miraculis*', p. 153.

⁵⁴ Michaud, 'Vérité des faits ou maquillages menteurs dans le *De miraculis*', p. 200.

⁵⁵ As in Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, I. 8, SC 133, p. 252.

⁵⁶ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 102–34.

⁵⁷ As also Dulacy, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de Saint Augustin*, p. 159; on these dreams more generally: pp. 181–200. On contemporary dream theory, see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, pp. 14–73. Augustine, in his treatise *De cura* (written for Paulinus of Nola in 422), says that what appears to be the martyr in dreams is an image produced by angels at the command of God, not the soul of the martyr himself (who may be interceding in heaven at that moment) and that the image is not a natural but a God-given phenomenon (XII. 15, XIII. 16, XVI. 19, 20, CSEL, 41, pp. 644–47, 647–49, 652–55).

Initial Doubts and Reassurances

Since Severus's letter contained only symbolic dreams, and Acts's account of Stephen does not describe his appearance, how had the *miraculés* (those having experienced a miracle) of Uzalis arrived at their envisioned image of the martyr? It is unclear whether knowledge of the only prior Greek miracle collection, that of the Egyptian soldier-saint Menas, in which he appeared in visions,⁵⁸ may have played a role in shaping those of Uzalis; the fact that in one of the latter, Stephen appears on a horse,⁵⁹ however, may point to this. Oral reports of visions of the healing saints Cosmas and Damian — the Greek written collection from Constantinople appears to be later⁶⁰ — may also have circulated. As we shall see, however, although the images of the martyr seen in Uzalis show some resemblance to visionary motifs in the African martyrs' passions, which were likely to have been read in church upon their feast days, the most striking similarities are to certain visions in the apocryphal Acts of the apostles, which may also have been read in church.

The fact that the envisionings of the saint in the Uzalis stories progress from that of minute relics to that of a shining young man seems to indicate, however, that the people of this town were involved in a process of gradual discovery or construction of an image to which they could relate — this is at least how our author presents it. It is not possible to determine exactly how much of the visions' content in the *Miracles* came from the informants and how much was shaped by the author to accord with what the Church wished the faithful to believe. Throughout, however, it is clear that the author's purpose is to convert the remaining unbelievers (possibly including Jews) in the city and to draw people into the Church and its doctrines through the benefactions to be expected from the saint. The stories thus present an image of him that is intended to be accepted as divine revelation, as well as what must be intended as models of petitionary behaviour to be internalized for repetition in hoped-for new miracles. The stories, then, are not only records of past events but models for future re-enactment. Their function resembles that of the steles outside the buildings in Epidaurus, upon which incoming patients could read

⁵⁸ Discussed in Delehaye, 'Recueils antiques de miracles des saints', pp. 46–49. On the iconography, see Leclercq, 'Ménas (saint)'.

⁵⁹ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 9, line 277, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 330.

⁶⁰ Delehaye, 'Recueils antiques de miracles des saints', pp. 8–18. Their shrines were at first only in the east; see Wittman, *Kosmas und Damian*, pp. 22–23. For the source material, see Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*.

what the god Asclepius had done for previous comers in and through their dreams of him, so that they could act, dream, and expect to be healed accordingly.⁶¹

‘A Certain Sprinkling of Blood and Ears of Grain’: The First Vision

The reception of Stephen’s relics in Uzalis was initiated and shaped by three visions. This fact and the frequency of visions in the collection makes it tempting to suspect the presence of an ancient and ongoing local or regional visionary and prophetic tradition in this community, continuing that evident in the visions of the north African martyrs.⁶² It may have been in obedience to what we saw to be Augustine’s reserve about dreams and visions that the author of the *Miracles* takes care to explain and authenticate the dreams and events he relates; he presents them not, as we might expect, as a continuation of Gospel miracles and apostolic visions, but as fulfilments of prophetic sayings in the Old Testament. Severus’s letter, which also does this, may have influenced our author, although the passages quoted are different. The practice is, of course, also an example of the well-known contemporary clerical habit of allegorical interpretation which understood every saying and verbal image in the religious sphere, and especially in the Old Testament, as a ‘figure’ or image of an eternal divine truth or plan.⁶³

As we saw, presumably outside Augustine’s direct influence, one of Severus’s initial prophetic visions is that by a holy virgin.⁶⁴ The *Uzalis Miracles* also begin with annunciations of events to come in dreams by holy women, but these make visible an experiential aspect that is not broached in Severus’s letter, namely doubt about the authenticity of the relic and the transformation of its perception. In the first vision, we learn that, unbeknownst to the Uzalis community, Stephen’s relics had been brought by an unnamed traveller from the east (Orosius?) to a monastery in the vicinity. When a holy virgin close to this community — therefore presumably a trustworthy person — overheard talk about this and wondered whether they

⁶¹ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 112–13. The texts of the inscriptions have been published and interpreted in *Asclepius*, ed. by Edelstein and Edelstein. Overviews of this tradition are in Herzog, ‘Asklepios’, cols 795–99; and Pietschmann, ‘Asklepios’. See also Leclercq, ‘Incubation’.

⁶² Cf. Bacht, ‘Montanisme’, and Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, pp. 127–36, cited in Dulaey, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de Saint Augustin*, p. 160, n. 120.

⁶³ See Auerbach, ‘Figura’; Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie*. Cf. Javelet, *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle*, pp. 1–66.

⁶⁴ Acts 16. 9–10. Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 10. 1–2, ed. by Bradbury, p. 86, lines 31–32, p. 88, lines 1–5.

were indeed the relics of this famous martyr, she had a dream vision that same night in which she saw

a certain flask in which there was a certain sprinkling of blood and ears of grain, as it were signifying bones. These a certain priest was holding in his hand and he said in her presence to her brother, also a monk there: 'Do you want to know how these can be proven to be the martyr's relics?' When he had said this, he poured [the contents of] the flask into [the monk's] mouth, and at once a flame of fire began to burst forth from his ears and eyes.⁶⁵

The references only to traces of blood and symbolic 'bones' may or may not point to the relics' actual appearance and/or a knowledge of Lucian and Avitus's letters.⁶⁶ It has been suggested that this cautious formulation was prompted by the prohibition of dismembering corpses in Roman law. As we saw, 'blood' tended to be a prime association with martyrdom.⁶⁷ By contrast, in the priest Lucian's report of the original discovery, there is mention only of 'little pieces', probably small bones, and none of 'blood' in whatever state.⁶⁸ But in Ambrose's letter about his well-publicized finding of the bodies of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius in Milan in 386, their skeletons are said to have been found with 'sanguinis plurimum' (much blood).⁶⁹

Victricius of Rouen's treatise ten years later, bringing relics of various martyrs to his city, also spoke of 'subjicitur oculis cruor et limus' (seeing blood and dust (earth)) and of seeing 'parvas reliquias, non nihil sanguis' (small remains and a bit of blood).⁷⁰ Would the latter have been the 'dust of flesh and nerves' and the 'new colours' which Avitus had mentioned? It has been suggested, however, that this may have been the earth from around the tomb which Lucian had been given, now

⁶⁵ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 1, lines 12–17, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 270: 'Statim sequente nocte per somnium ampulla quaedam eidem demonstratur, intra se habens sanguinis quamdam aspersionem et aristarum quasi ossuum significationem, quam presbyter quidam manu tenens germano eius monacho illa praesente locutus est dicens: "Vis scire quomodo martyrum probentur reliquiae?" Quo dicto, ampullam eius ori injecit, et mox flamma ignis per aures eius atque oculos evomi coepit'.

⁶⁶ Roman law forbade the partition of dead bodies: Duval, 'Culte des Reliques en Occident', pp. 49–50.

⁶⁷ See Waszink, 'Blut'; and Duval, 'Culte des Reliques en Occident', p. 51.

⁶⁸ *Epist. Luciani*, 8, PL, 41, col. 815[C]. Delehaye, *Origines du culte des martyrs*, p. 81, notes that if Lucian's letter were known, religious fervour must have obscured this discrepant detail.

⁶⁹ Ambrose, *Epist.* 1. 77. 2, line 18, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 128.

⁷⁰ Victoricius, *De laude*, X, lines 2, 37–38, CCSL, 64, pp. 84, 86, respectively. Augustine speaks of the relics he installed in his city in 424 as *exiguus pulvis* (a bit of dust): Augustine, *Sermo* 317. 1, PL, 38, col. 1435[A].

perceived as 'blood'-soaked.⁷¹ The association, in this vision, of blood with fire makes it tempting to suspect that the lady was acquainted with Victricius's sermon. For as we saw, Victricius associates this 'blood', as well as the martyrs' bodies as a whole, with the light of divine ethereal fire, just as in this vision. For after arguing that those who live in Christ through being inhabited by the Holy Spirit are, by adoption, of one body with him and the Father, he asserts that they therefore share in Christ's light (John 17. 21–22), and, after their martyrdom, their blood (as that which holds the body together) also ignites through the gift of divinity.⁷² Therefore, if there is blood in the body, the blood itself too becomes part of the heavenly fire.⁷³ Later, Victricius refers to the 'blood' seen with the relics as the sign of the Holy Spirit in the remains of the martyr's bodies.⁷⁴ It is not impossible that this virgin, through her contacts with the monks, was acquainted with Victricius's sermon. Another possibility, of course, is that she visualized the fire described in Severus of Minorca's letter, perhaps assimilated to that of the Holy Spirit as it had been seen around the apostles (Acts 2. 1–4), that had now descended upon this community. This is certainly a latent association throughout the collection.

Literary and folkloristic studies show that the image or symbol of fire is one that can, by association, bring forth other images that energize and vitalize the perceiver.⁷⁵ In our source, the fact that the fire is specifically said to have been seen coming from the monk's *ears and eyes*, however, points so clearly to the theme of *hearing and seeing* that we saw in the address to the people and that keeps returning emphatically in the *Miracles* that I am tempted to suspect that our author has here adjusted the lady's description. The combination of blood and grain, however, is likely to point — indirectly — to the martyr's participation in Christ's sacrifice as symbolized by the Eucharist, an image that would accord with Victricius's argument that Christ and the martyr are one body. Alongside eastern writers, Irenaeus of Lyon and Cyprian, however, had also pointed to the equivalence of the martyr's sacrifice with that of Christ as the Eucharist.⁷⁶ As presented, then, the visionary

⁷¹ Crook, *Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints*, p. 20. Lucian's letter mentioned its being taken also when Stephen's body was found: *Epist. Luciani*, 8, PL, 41, col. 815[C].

⁷² Victricius, *De laude*, VIII, lines 10–11, CCSL, 64, p. 81.

⁷³ Victricius, *De laude*, IX, lines 23–24, CCSL, 64, p. 83.

⁷⁴ Victricius, *De laude*, XII, lines 35–37, CCSL, 64, p. 90.

⁷⁵ As for instance, Bachelard, *La Flamme d'une chandelle*; Edsman, *Ignis divinus*.

⁷⁶ Cyprian (Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus), *Epist.* 76. 3. 1–2 (lines 79–93, CCSL, 3B, pp. 611–12) cited in Rordorf, 'Martyre I'.

images assimilate the indeterminate relics firmly to received Church tradition as well as to what may have been a local visionary one.

Believing this dynamic and inspiring image to be a divine revelation of an as yet invisible truth may have convinced the lady herself of the relic's authenticity, but our author, again like Severus, feels the need to explain it to his audience also as an annunciation of subsequent visible events,⁷⁷ just as he later, like Severus, authenticates the contemporary miracles as fulfilments of certain Old Testament prophecies. Significantly, his chosen explanation reveals other biblical images shaping his, and perhaps his community's, mindset. Thus, he tells us, the flask was later received by the bishop, and

what, finally, was the fire from the flask that enveloped [the priest's] ears and eyes, what else did it then prefigure, if not that when the preaching of the holy relics reached the face of the monks, it would set alight the whole body of the Church, through their hearing and seeing it, with the fire of the brightness of God, so that all might deservedly say: 'As we heard, so we saw' [Psalm 47. 9 (48. 8)]?

Neither is that which appeared about that priest, who applied the flask to the monk's mouth, which then emitted fire, empty of meaning. For it was he who, having recently returned from the east, placed the word about the holy relics which he had seen there into the mouth of the servants of God, as though he moved the flask there, and set [their faces] alight with holy fire.⁷⁸

The easy equating here of the dream image with an ostensibly very different historical fact reminds of Severus's equating the dreamed Lion with the palpable singing monks. What unites these pairs of very different appearances is the common spiritual pattern which each is presumed to exhibit. The author and his hearers are indeed likely to have understood the fire as that which Severus's letter mentions as the fire which Christ wished to light in the world just before his Second Coming,⁷⁹ as hopefully transmitted by the information in his letter. The

⁷⁷ On the arrival and installation of the relics, see Duval, 'Culte des Reliques en Occident', pp. 51–58.

⁷⁸ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 1, lines 22–29, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 270: 'Quod deinde ignis per ampullam aures atque oculos comprehendit, quid al iud tunc praesignavit nisi quod praedicatio sanctarum reliquiarum perveniens ad os monachorum, unum corpus Ecclesiae per auditum atque visum claritatis Dei igne succendit, ut omnes merito dicerent: "Sicut audivimus, ita et vidimus". Nec quod ille presbyter apparuit ad os monachi am pullam applicuit quae ignem emisit, inane fuit. Is enim erat qui, nuper ex Oriente rediens et de sanctis reliquiis quas ille viderat in ore servorum Dei verbum ponens, quasi ampullam admovit et sancto igne succendit.'

⁷⁹ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 31. 4, ed. by Bradbury, p. 124, lines 5–8. Cf. Luke 12. 49.

motif of actually seeing materialized what had up to then only been heard about — the ultimate realization of God's Kingdom — will be seen to recur in the Uzalís collection. Not only this prophecy of the psalmist, but similar prophecies adduced in subsequent stories all presuppose the understanding of the present time as approaching that of the Lord's vindication of his chosen people in the City of God on the holy Mount Zion, according to the psalm:

As we have heard, so we have seen
in the city of the Lord of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God establishes forever. (Psalm 47. 9 (48. 8))

If the repeated reference to this prophecy indeed reveals a sense of the present time as an end time of fulfilment, it would explain the expectant excitement evident on almost every page of our source.

‘A Certain Boy Clad in White’: Foreseeing the Relic's Installation

In the second vision, also by a holy virgin (which would vouch for its truth), the relics are for the first time transformed into an image of a living human being:

Another holy virgin too, seemed to see herself in a dream making a journey to the place of the ancient martyrs, placed in the suburb of the city, which is called Felix and Gennadius — not, however, the way she was accustomed to take from the city as the quickest, but one that is a bit longer and more winding. On that road she saw innumerable people coming, happily rejoicing and singing psalms, and carrying candles and torches with great solemnity, while accompanying a certain boy clad in white, while repeatedly shouting: ‘The confessor of Christ! The confessor of Christ!’ When they had led him to the church and lifted him onto the pulpit, she saw that boy suddenly extending his hands and himself saying to the people: ‘Behold, you have a martyr’.⁸⁰

The author subsequently explains this vision as a symbolic preview of the relics' subsequent ceremonial arrival and installation in the cathedral. The motif of taking

⁸⁰ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 2, lines 1–12, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 272: ‘Alia autem virgo sacra ad locum antiquorum martyrum in suburbio civitatis constitutorum, qui Felix et Gennadius nuncupatur, videbatur sibi iter facere per somnium, non ea via qua de civitate pergit ad solet compendium, sed aliquantulum devia et flexuosa. Per hanc videt adventare innumeros populos gaudentes sane atque psallentes, cereos et luminaria cum grandi celebritate gestantes, et quasi quemdam candidatum parvulum comitantes, eique iteratis vocibus inclamantes: “Confessor Christi! Confessor Christi!” Quem cum ad ecclesiam perduxissent, atque supra pulpitem elevassent, videt eundem parvulum subito manus extendisse et ore proprio populis dixisse: “Ecce habetis martyrem.”’

the longer, winding road suggests the sense of a journey, and this can also be read as symbolizing an impending change of orientation. Jung has identified the child as an archetypal image with many forms and dimensions, pointing — as in the Christ child — to an intimation of a new, creative synthesis of a divine and a human dimension about to take place.⁸¹ Stephen's appearance or age is not mentioned in the story of his martyrdom; entrusted with the task of feeding the faithful, he is very unlikely to have been a small boy. In the pagan sphere, however, there are myths of certain gods as already powerful children;⁸² Pausanias's description of Greece mentions a statue of the healing god Asclepius as a child at Megalopolis.⁸³ Where the boy image does appear in a Christian context, however, is in the apocryphal Acts of the apostles. In the Acts of Peter and the Acts of John it is, alongside that of an old man and a youth, one of the different images of Christ appearing to different persons.⁸⁴ As for the dreaming lady in Uzalis: was there perhaps a dream-contamination of Stephen's feast day (26 December) with the birth of Christ? Is the saint — anything is possible in a dream — being 'born', as it were, in his new town?

As we saw, not only Victricius's treatise but also the African passion narratives clearly merged the martyr with his model, Christ. In his book *Martyrium*, André Grabar suggests that an image of a boy holding a crown on the cover of a fifth-century silver reliquary deriving from Africa, now in the Vatican museum, also points to this overlap.⁸⁵ Could it just possibly be the silver casket of Stephen's relics mentioned later in the *Miracles*?⁸⁶ On the cover described by Grabar, the figure, who must be Christ, stands on a hillock from which the four rivers of Paradise flow, and two candles are placed at his sides, as would have been the case on earth with the emperor or his image. Not only does Christ hold a crown, another crown is seen held over him by the divine Hand. Grabar offers an explanation that is based on a passage in a letter of the African bishop Cyprian about martyrs: '[Dominus][...] ipse in certamine agonis nostri et coronat pariter et coronatur' (in the

⁸¹ As Jung and Kerényi, *Einführung in das Wesen der Mythologie*, pp. 125, 127. It can also be a symbol of the Self in its cosmic meaning (p. 135).

⁸² Jung and Kerényi, *Einführung in das Wesen der Mythologie*, pp. 39–104.

⁸³ Cited in *Asclepius*, ed. by Edelstein and Edelstein, I, 358.

⁸⁴ *Acta Ioannis*, 88–90, in *Acta apostolorum apocrypha* [hereafter *Acta ap. apocr.*], ed. by Tischendorf, Lipsius, and Bonnet, II, 1, 194–96; *Apocryphal New Testament* [hereafter *Apocr.*], trans. by Elliott, pp. 316–17; and *Acta Petri*, 21, in *Acta ap. apocr.*, ed. by Tischendorf, Lipsius, and Bonnet, I, 68, lines 30–32, p. 69, lines 1–13; *Apocr.*, trans. by Elliott, p. 415.

⁸⁵ Grabar, *Martyrium*, II, 56–57.

⁸⁶ *Mirac. Steph.*, I, 8, line 6, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 292.

struggle of our fight [the Lord] [...] crowns and is himself also crowned),⁸⁷ meaning that in their passions the martyrs renew that of Christ and his victory. For the latter, an additional association, however, is also possible — even likely. One of the Church Fathers', and especially Augustine's, favourite images is that of Christ as 'medicus humilis' (the humble doctor);⁸⁸ as we shall see humility is exactly the quality the author adduces to explain the smallness of the figure. A deeper understanding of this ostensibly incongruous image, then, may have been that of Christ, the humble saviour-doctor,⁸⁹ in the martyr. A possible precedent for seeing a saint as Christ (instead of the other way around) which may have been known at least to the author is Paulinus of Nola's, as we saw in other ways very different, description of an old sailor's vision of Saint Felix's appearance — not otherwise specified — alternating with that of the glorified Christ as described in Revelation.⁹⁰

To return to the *Miracles*, the author then adduces another prophetic saying that now unmistakably points to a sense of living in an end time:

It is wonderful to say how much of this vision too was followed by truth: thus not undeservedly did the divine voice once foretell through the prophet: 'Behold the day will come, says the Lord, and I shall give my Spirit to all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and I shall pour out my Spirit over my manservants and maidservants; and I shall give signs in the sky above and upon the earth below' [Joel 2. 28–30]. Thus even a star is said to have appeared at the above-mentioned place of the martyrs [Felix and Gennadius] by those who were in the fields on that day.⁹¹

This quotation shows that, for the Uzalis Church authorities at least, the contemporary return of miracles revived an expectation of the imminence of Christ's Second Coming, this being the Christian reading of Joel's prophecy about the

⁸⁷ Cyprian, *Epist.* 10. 4. 4, lines 97–98, CCSL, 3B, p. 54.

⁸⁸ See Arbesmann, 'Christ, the *medicus humilis* in S. Augustine'. See also Vannier, 'L'Image du Christ médecin chez les Pères', and Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung in der Theologie der frühen Kirchenväter*.

⁸⁹ Vannier, 'Image du Christ médecin chez les Pères', p. 525.

⁹⁰ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 49. 3, CSEL, 29, p. 392, lines 26–28, and p. 393, line 1.

⁹¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 2, lines 12–18, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 272: 'Mirabile dictu est quanta huius quoque visionis veritas consecuta est. Nec immerito olim per prophetam divina voce dictum est: "Ecce dies venient", dicit Dominus, "et dabo de spiritu meo super omnem carnem, et prophetabunt filii vestri et filiae vestrae, et iuue nesci vestri visiones videbunt, et senes vestri somnia somniabunt; et super servos meos et ancillas effundam de Spiritu meo; et dabo signa in caelo sursum et in terra deorsum." Unde etiam stella ad locum supradictorum martyrum ab his qui tunc in agro fuerunt occurrisse refertur.'

future signs announcing the Lord's Day as it is quoted in Acts (2. 17–21). The early third-century prologue to the passion of Perpetua, however, had also quoted it as something happening in the present time.⁹² And the rest of the passion narrative's prologue stresses the same things we saw our author do in his prologue to the collection's second book: God's glory and his fulfilling his promises.⁹³ The star above the martyrs' church of course resembles the luminous sphere mentioned in Severus's more recent letter, where its identification as the saint vies with that as the column of fire as more applicable to the whole series of incidents related.⁹⁴ Victricius's treatise, stressing the luminosity of the saints' bodies as united with that of Christ, had pointed to his saying to the disciples: 'You are the light of the world'.⁹⁵ Were those working in the fields aware of what was happening at the shrine, and did they already know about Severus's fiery sphere? Or did our author make that connection? Or did the men, in their state of receptivity to spiritual phenomena, simply perceive the fiery glow of spiritual energy that is sometimes reported in contemporary monastic literature?⁹⁶ There may also be an underlying reminiscence of the star of Bethlehem. For there is one other possibility: a legend that Stephen, as a servant of King Herod, saw the star of Bethlehem in the sky and announced it to the King.⁹⁷

The author then proceeds to describe the actual ceremonial procession and installation of the relics as the actualization of the dream events and to explain the image of the small boy as an indication, on the one hand, of the smallness of the particles carried in the procession and, on the other, as symbolizing the martyr's innocence and humility as a child carried by the bishop in his arms, just as the casket was during the procession. And he even lets the martyr — indirectly — 'speak' to the people. Addressing the reader, our author says:

Deign to accept how this [dream vision] too was fulfilled by divine agency. For that same day upon which the blessed Stephen's holy relics had entered the church, the letter brought

⁹² Perpetua and others, *Passio sanctarum martyrum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* [hereafter *Passio Perpetuae*], *Prol.*, PL, 3, col. 15B. Meyers, 'Citations bibliques dans le *De miraculis*', p. 148, also points to this parallel.

⁹³ *Passio Perpetuae*, *Prol.*, PL, 3, cols 15–16.

⁹⁴ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 20. 6, ed. by Bradbury, p. 110, lines 31–33, and p. 112, lines 1–5; and Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 20. 12, ed. by Bradbury, p. 112, lines 14–15.

⁹⁵ Victricius, *De laude*, IV, line 33, CCSL, 64, p. 75. Cf. Matthew 5. 14.

⁹⁶ As indicated by Edsman, *Le Baptême de feu*, pp. 154–74; Daniélou, 'Feuersäule (Lichtsäule, Wolkensäule)', col. 189; Veuthey, 'Illumination', col. 1334.

⁹⁷ Bovon, 'Dossier on Stephen', p. 293.

to us of a certain holy Bishop Severus of the isle of Minorca was read, as the first of the canonical readings, from the pulpit and listened to by the Church with great joy. It contained the miracles of the glorious Stephen which, through the presence of his relics on the just-mentioned island, he had done there for the salvation of all, making believers of the Jews. Whence, through that reading of such deeds of his, he [Stephen] seemed to extend his hands to the acclaiming and exulting faithful and to say, 'Behold, you have a martyr!'⁹⁸

The miracles reported, then, are presented as Stephen himself speaking — possibly also because the lectors in this period tended to be young boys being trained.⁹⁹ Could this also have influenced the image of the saint as a young boy? At the same time, the reading of Severus's letter functioned according to Geertz's model, the presentation of 'belief reality' by an 'authority' in 'a ritual context',¹⁰⁰ conditioning the listeners to expect and experience similar things from these same relics. Our author's somewhat forced interpretation of this vision as verified by subsequent formally analogous events must have been intended to convince any still doubting hearers of the martyr's actual and personal presence in the community.

Imaging One's Cure

Before proceeding to examine the first cure, the nature of this kind of healing needs to be briefly reiterated. Following Eugen Drewermann's interpretation of New Testament miracles,¹⁰¹ I characterize the emotional pattern of the cures in this collection as that of a transformation from anxiety and loss of centredness to a healing trust (a parallel meaning of *fides*) and connectedness with one's life source and the universe, often but not exclusively entailing that from illness to wholeness.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 2, lines 36–45, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 274: 'Hoc quoque qualiter impletum sit divina procuracione attentius dignemini accipere. Eodem namque die quo ingressae sunt ecclesiam beati Stephani sanctae reliquiae, in ipso principio canonicarum lectionum, epistola ad nos quoque delata cuiusdam sancti episcopi, Severi nomine, Minoricensis insulae, de pulpito in auribus Ecclesiae cum ingenti favore recitata est, quae continebat gloriosi Stephani virtutes quas in insula memorat per praesentia m reliquiarum suarum in salutem omnium illic credentium perfecerat Iudaeorum, unde ex hac recitatione talium factorum suorum tamquam extensione manuum suarum acclamantibus et exultantibus fidelibus ipse dicere videretur: "Ecce habetis martyrem."

⁹⁹ Hamdoune, 'La Vie quotidienne à Uzalis', p. 122, n. 48.

¹⁰⁰ Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', p. 90.

¹⁰¹ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 240–41.

¹⁰² A similar but more formal structure is proposed by Devallet, 'Thèmes et structures du récit', pp. 164–66.

As we saw, taking the shamanic cure as his model, Drewermann regards this transformation as taking place through the unlocking of the heart and deblocking of vital energies by the experience, in the dream or iconic mode of awareness, of certain archetypal patterns or symbols which we 'find' in ourselves and which, in his view, mediate the unknowable God's communication with humankind.¹⁰³

As we saw, René Devisch, in his book about a preliterate society in the African Congo, uses the same characterization in a non-religious sense for the process and results of a symbolic healing ritual there. He describes the Yaka concept of illness as a disconnecting and disordering of psycho-physical energies which blocks a person's vital source.¹⁰⁴ The curing process undertakes to undo this through the enacting of certain transformational symbols. For 'ritual symbols', he writes, 'are [...] corporeal devices, processes and methods or patterns that [...] arise from a potential which, akin to the dream, unconceals both images and inner energy woven into the texture of the body'.¹⁰⁵ The Yaka healing ritual he describes, that for fertility in women, lets the patient enact symbols of death, rebirth, and fertility in the animal and plant world; this, prolonged, action induces and takes place in a state of dream or iconic awareness, or trance, in which the images are experienced as affect-laden realities.¹⁰⁶ It effects a catharsis in which the subject's 'vital source' is deblocked and she is brought into harmony with herself, her group, and her lifeworld in channelling life-bearing.¹⁰⁷

As already indicated too, many contemporary psychologists also regard an image and especially a dream image as a visualized pattern of psychic movement.¹⁰⁸ In our source, the detailed descriptions of the dreamed miracles makes it possible to relate the subjects' transformation, as in shamanic ritual, to the experiencing of certain dream images or symbols as living realities. In contrast to the many, usually natural, symbols in shamanic cures, however, there is in these stories one dominating image: that of the martyr himself and a certain quality of light associated with him. Although the narrative of Stephen's preaching and martyrdom in Acts 6–8. 3 does not describe his appearance and the dreamers had no other now discoverable specific

¹⁰³ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 769.

¹⁰⁴ Devisch, *Weaving the Threads of Life*, pp. 132–33.

¹⁰⁵ Devisch, *Weaving the Threads of Life*, p. 280.

¹⁰⁶ Devisch, *Weaving the Threads of Life*, pp. 255, 257.

¹⁰⁷ Devisch, *Weaving the Threads of Life*, p. 211.

¹⁰⁸ Epstein, *Waking Dream Therapy*, p. 18, and Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, pp. 177–89. 'Dynamisme': Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes*, pp. 10–13.

information about it, their reports as presented by the author nevertheless show a gradually emerging clearly delineated image of his person and even of his face. As we shall see, it not surprisingly resembles some earlier Christian visionary images.

‘A Beautiful Appearance’: The First Dream-Cure

The third vision, by the barber Concordius, is not a preview of events but the performance of a cure by the martyr, now for the first time visualized as a beautiful and powerful (young) adult. The fact that this is the appearance he will have in the Uzalis visions from then on makes it tempting to suspect that the report of this dream — as we shall see, perhaps as interpreted and somewhat modified by the Church authorities — became the model for the subsequent ones. However, as will be seen, this image of the beautiful young man could also have been taken independently by each dreamer from certain visions in the apocryphal Acts of the apostles. Significantly, as in Ambrose’s Milan and Victricius’s Rouen, the Church is here emphatically presented as taking the leading role in guiding her faithful towards expecting divine help through and from the saint. In Uzalis, there is no noticeable threat from outside to be addressed through the saint’s putative power but, as already indicated, there may have been lingering effects of the long-time split in the community itself between the official Catholic Church and the separatist Donatist faction that still needed to be healed. For we learn later on in our source that Uzalis’s main church or cathedral (*ecclesia*) had once been in the possession of the Donatists,¹⁰⁹ ostensibly an indication of their former dominant position in the city. The miracle-seeking mindset in general, then, is likely to have been already present in a large part of the city population. It has been suggested that what we may be seeing in our source, and even more in Augustine’s all-too-brief notices, are the Donatists’ practices around relics entering into the reunited Church with them.¹¹⁰ What these miracle stories also seem to show, then, is how the acceptance of Stephen’s relics by the whole community unified it. Our author does not tell us whether or not the local (Donatist?) martyrs Felix and Gennadius had ever performed any miracles. However this may be, Stephen as the first and only biblically attested Christian martyr was now clearly the perfect saint for everyone, Catholics and former Donatists, to rally around and thereby effect the cohesion of the community.

¹⁰⁹ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 7, lines 31–34, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 290–92.

¹¹⁰ Lancel, ‘Saint Augustin’, p. 76.

Nevertheless, this fourth story shows traces of an authentic personal experience. Our author tells us:

In the same period, a certain barber of the city named Concordius fell and broke his foot. Lying on his bed for a long time, he was afflicted with various pains. When, because of this, the thought of his poverty, and his solicitude for his small sons because of the mishap in which he had been placed, tormented him with grief: behold, one night while he was sleeping — but the One who watches over Israel not sleeping [Psalm 120 (121). 4], Who creates small and great things, and Who has equal care for all [Liber Sapientiae 6. 8 (Vulgate)] — he [Concordius] saw himself being taken in a dream to ascend a certain steep and narrow ridge up a mountain, from where there was no going back, no way out. By this, what else was shown but that he should know and understand that on the narrow ridge of his straitened circumstance he should seek not human help but only God's?¹¹¹

Although certain cities in this period are known to have had government-paid physicians,¹¹² this is not attested for Uzalis, and it looks as though the barber had not received professional medical help. Our author here inserts didactic phrases about God's care to indicate who is directing the events that follow. Sensibly, he then interprets the mountain impasse as a symbol of the barber's anxiety and explains as he goes. It makes visible what must be something like a universal pattern of human dream experience and, as our author in his own way suggests, its quality of a boundary or 'liminal' situation that necessitates the breaking out of everyday constrictions would tend also to effect the breaking down of the barriers separating everyday common-sense awareness from the unknown dimensions and dynamics of awareness outside it. In his well-known book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James has described spiritual regenerations as occurring especially in this kind of awareness.¹¹³ As we saw, Devisch also emphasizes that the healing

¹¹¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 4, lines 1–14, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 280: 'Per idem tempus quidam civitatis tonsor, qui Concordius vocabatur, pedem cadendo fregerat. Is diu lecto decumbens, variis doloribus cruciatur. Cum hinc eum paupertatis cogitatio, inde parvulorum sollicitudo in tanto casus sui maerore positum maceraret, ecce quadam nocte, ipso quidem dormiente, sed *non illo dormitante neque obdormiente qui custodit Israël, qui pusillum et magnum fecit, et aequaliter illi cura est pro omnibus*, videt per somnium perductum se in arduum quemdam angustumque cuiusdam montis ascensum, unde nulla est sibi facultas remeandi, nullus exitus evadendi. Ex quo quid aliud demonstrabatur ei quam ut sciret atque intellegeret, in angustiis pressurarum suarum, non humanum, sed solius Dei debere quaerere auxilium?'

¹¹² Hamdoune, 'La Vie quotidienne à Uzalis', p. 126.

¹¹³ James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 388–89: 'The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely "understandable" world. [...] we belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world, for we belong in the most intimate sense wherever our ideals belong. [...] When we

transformations of symbolic ritual take place in a dreamlike kind of consciousness, as does Drewermann when he insists that it is at the level of an imagistic awareness that the miraculous transformations described in the New Testament — but also in other religious traditions, especially the shamanic ones — in fact take place.¹¹⁴ An increasing number of present-day psychologists, too, regard mental images as the *de facto* bridges between mind and body.¹¹⁵

The Uzalien dreams and visions can thus be understood as the becoming aware of an ongoing invisible spiritual process through spontaneous visualization. It would resemble what Paul Ricoeur describes as the poet's 'finding' images — at the frontier between *bios* and *logos* (unconscious life and speaking) — of patterns of feeling that have not yet been given a shape or a name.¹¹⁶ As we saw, however, modern psychology has also rediscovered another extremely important phenomenon connected with images: the clinically attested viewer's involuntary affective imitation of the dynamic pattern which an image makes visible.¹¹⁷ The third-century Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus had already pointed to the same phenomenon when he asserted that the viewer becomes what he sees; according to André Grabar, this is the way in which late antique viewers tended to experience images.¹¹⁸ In the Uzalis visions, then, the visionary's perceiving of his own spontaneously appearing affect-charged image would in turn induce an intensified interior replication of it, which would accelerate the ongoing inner transformation according to the image's inherent dynamic pattern. And not only an interior or spiritual transformation. As indicated earlier, today it has finally been scientifically proven that certain identified molecules — neuropeptides — translate and transmit the dynamic patterns of emotions as directives that activate all of the body's autonomous systems.¹¹⁹ It would seem that the two processes just mentioned — that of visually becoming aware of an ongoing affective-spiritual process and that of spontaneously replicating the dynamic pattern of a perceived image in mind and body — tend to overlap

commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change.'

¹¹⁴ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 188–206.

¹¹⁵ For a recent overview and analysis, see Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*.

¹¹⁶ Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, p. 306.

¹¹⁷ See Epstein, *Waking Dream Therapy*, p. 18, and Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, pp. 177–89. See also Freedberg, *Power of Images*.

¹¹⁸ Grabar, 'Plotin et les origines de l'esthétique médiévale', p. 23.

¹¹⁹ Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*; Ader, 'Historical Perspectives on Psychoneuroimmunology'.

and are in fact complementary. The visions described in our source, then, appear to be precious evidence of this two-layered process.

In Severus's letter, a venerable widow figure appearing in the first vision is interpreted as a symbol of the Synagogue. In Concordius's vision too, a venerable lady appears:

he said that a certain lady with a venerable face appeared who gave to him, thus afflicted and filled with the bitterness of his pains, what appeared to be a fig, through whose meaning of sweetness he received the balm of spiritual grace. This gave him the confidence to ask; he pressed her with prayers and begged her [to restore] his health.¹²⁰

This lady is experienced as a mother-figure: she feeds the dreamer. In this period, the fig could be used as a purifying medicine, but it was in this period also understood as a symbol of fruitfulness;¹²¹ perhaps, then, it suggested not only spiritual food, as our author surmises, but also regenerative grace. This experienced act, I suggest, is the first transformer. It reminds one of Lucian's report that Stephen's sweet smell effected many cures.¹²² Concordius now dares to ask and hope for a cure.

There is no indication, however, that the dreamer himself knew with whom he was dealing; the figure he sees also resembles the mother-goddess Isis, who had been well known for her care and her healing.¹²³ The author, however, knows and instructs his audience; thinking of Severus's letter, or perhaps thinking of the lady in *The Shepherd of Hermas*,¹²⁴ he immediately identifies her as the Church: 'but she, who without doubt embodied the figure of the Church, said: "I shall now go to the holy Stephen and he will make you healthy."¹²⁵ This is a hinge-event in another way: the lady Church now does not pray for him to an invisible Christ, as a Church elder would have done in the Christian healing tradition according to the letter of James 5. 13–15. She goes physically to an apparently new figure of hope in the subject's lifeworld, someone who is referred to as 'the holy Stephen'. What we see here is an explicit transition being made from the Christian healing

¹²⁰ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 4, lines 14–17, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 280: 'Namque apparuisse sibi ait quamdam reverenti visu feminam, quae sibi sic afflicto et dolorum amaritudine repleto speciem fici traderet, per cuius dulcedinis significatione in spiritualis gratiae perciperet suavitatem. Unde etiam fiduciam impetrandi accipiens precibus insistebat, et sanitatem ab ea petebat.'

¹²¹ See Reichmann, 'Feige I. D. Christlich'.

¹²² *Epist. Luciani*, 8, PL, 41, col. 815[C].

¹²³ See Fischer, 'Isis'.

¹²⁴ Her first of many appearances: Hermas, *Le Pasteur*, Vis. II. 5 (1). 3, SC, 53bis, p. 88.

¹²⁵ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 4, lines 18–19, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 280: 'At illa, quaetypum procul dubio gestabat Ecclesiae: "Modo, inquit, accedo ad sanctum Stephanum, et faciet te sanum."'

tradition in the private home through prayer and perhaps anointing, possibly led by a Church elder or a charismatic individual,¹²⁶ to a healing centred in or emanating from the public space of the martyr's shrine and attributed to his intercession. In the pagan world, as we saw earlier, empowerment and healing through seeing a god, either in a vision or in his statue, had a long history. Asclepius had continued to appear in person in dream-visions to those sleeping in his temples to cure them on the spot or to give them instructions for curing themselves later.¹²⁷ I have not come across any temples of his, however, in Proconsular Africa, near Uzalis, nor of any shrine there of the Christian healing saints Cosmas and Damian.¹²⁸

To return to our story: if Stephen's name was indeed mentioned in the dream, we may assume that the dreamer had heard about the temporary placement of the martyr's relics at the country shrine of Felix and Gennadius, where he later first goes to give thanks for his cure. The next sentence exhibits another transformational moment:

After this had been said he became sure [that he would be healed]. For when she departed and he was grieving that she left him behind, saying: 'You send me away and go yourself?', he saw her going to saint Stephen as she had promised, and pleading for him, saying these words: 'I ask you by your holiness, cure him, have compassion upon him, have compassion upon his sons, liberate an innocent man from tribulation.'¹²⁹

Not only the lady's words, I suggest, but her being *seen* to plead with the martyr, now for the first time visible — but neither his appearance nor the location is described — again inspires Concordius's confidence that he will now really be healed. The dynamic pattern of this image — that of a caring, motherly lady enlisting heavenly aid — is another transformer. In addition, she presents the visible example of

¹²⁶ See Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, pp. 233–76. For Christian healing in the antique context, see Avalos, *Health Care and the Rise of Christianity*. On Christian healing as a continuing tradition, see Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing*. On the different models of healing, i.e. confrontational, intercessory, reliquarial, etc., see Kydd, *Healing through the Centuries*; and Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung in der Theologie der frühen Kirchen-väter*. Especially for Africa, see Benseddik, 'Pratique médicale en Afrique au temps d'Augustin'.

¹²⁷ *Asclepius*, ed. by Edelstein and Edelstein.

¹²⁸ Duval, *Loca sanctorum Africae*, fig. 313.

¹²⁹ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 4, lines 20–24, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 282: 'Quod dictum facti fides est subsecuta: nam cum illa discederet atque iste post eam derelinqui se dolens diceret: "Dimittis me et ducis te?", ecce videt illam sicut illi promiserat, ad sanctum Stephanum accedentem et pro se rogantem ac dicentem his verbis: "Rogo te per sanctitatem tuam, cura illum; miserere illi, miserere filiis eius, libera hominem innocentem de tribulatione sua."'

what the believer himself can and should do from now on. For notwithstanding all this preparation, Concordius is not yet cured.

Then suddenly, as more often in dreams, there is again a change of scene — is the dreamer now more or less awake? The martyr appears close at hand, and Concordius now knows what to do:

Then he saw the one who had been asked coming towards him in the room in which he was lying, clad in white and with a beautiful appearance. As soon as he recognized him, the ill man addressed the doctor, the poor man the wealthy one, the suppliant the patron, with these words and tears, saying: 'Dear Friend of Christ, cure me, liberate me from this tribulation, have compassion for me, have compassion for my children!'

The praying man had scarcely finished speaking these words when the granter of prayers replied to these requests, saying: 'Arise. You have been made whole.'¹³⁰

In the story of Stephen's martyrdom in Acts — somewhat surprisingly nowhere mentioned in the collection — he had also been described as 'a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit' and 'full of grace and strength, he performed great signs and wonders among the people' (Acts 6. 5 and 8). This then would have inspired Concordius's confidence. About the martyr's personal appearance is said only that, while preaching, 'viderunt faciem eius tamquam faciem angeli' (they saw his face as though it were that of an angel).¹³¹ Although Concordius must have seen it, we hear no details about the martyr's face in the story. The figure of the beautiful man clad in white — his age is not mentioned — probably resembled that of the traditional appearances of the pagan gods, such as Asclepius,¹³² as well as perhaps the glorified Christ in Revelation 1. 12–16.¹³³ Certain African martyrs' visions of Christ are similar — with one important difference. In these visions, the Christ figure is extraordinarily

¹³⁰ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 4, lines 25–31, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 282: 'Tum illum qui rogabatur vidit ad se atque ad cubiculum in quo iacebat ingredientem, amictum veste candida, specie decora. Quem mox ut agnovit, ut aegrotus medicum, egenus copiosum, supplex patronum, his verbis cum lacrimis rogabat dicens: "Carus Christi amicus, cura me, libera me de tribulatione, miserere mihi, miserere filiis meis." Vix precator verba finier at et iam precum exauditor precibus respondebat, dicens: "Surge, salvus factus es."'

¹³¹ Acts 6. 15. Prudentius, *Peristefanon*, II. 369–72, CCSL, 126, p. 270, refers to this.

¹³² *Asclepius*, ed. by Edelstein and Edelstein, II, 233. The Cappadocian Paul who, as will be seen, was cured through Stephen's relics in Hippo mentions in the account of his experience a vision while in Uzalis of an unidentified man, 'qui dam aspectu clarus, et candido crine venerabilis' (a certain man of shining appearance, venerable through his white hair), who promised him that he would be cured within three months (Augustine, *Sermo* 322, PL, 38, col. 1444[C]). It too appears to resemble that of the risen Christ in Revelation 1. 14.

¹³³ On the tradition of divine appearances, see Cizek, 'Bild der idealen Schönheit'.

tall: his head extends into the clouds and his feet cannot always be seen.¹³⁴ Most of all, however, the image resembles that in visions of Christ ostensibly in normal human stature in the apocryphal Acts of John.¹³⁵ And Victricius's description of the heavenly martyrs' presumed appearance as 'aeterni luminis indumentum' (clothed in eternal light) and 'magis ac magis in specie florescunt' (ever increasing in beauty)¹³⁶ may — through preaching — have reached the people of Uzalis too.

What is said about Concordius's attitude as a client towards his patron, however, is almost certainly an interpolation by the author, concerned about creating a model for his listeners to re-enact. One wonders, too, if the phrase 'friend of Christ' was a careful emendation or insertion by the dream's clerical interpreter. Stephen's powerful, benign appearance, however, together with his Christlike words, resembling those to the cripple on his stretcher (Matthew 9. 6), implicitly also make Christ present through him to effect the final transformation. As a whole, the dream is so obviously in line with what appears to be Church propaganda that one might surmise that the dreamer himself may not have been quite sure with whom he was dealing and that the Church authorities later helped him to 'interpret' his dream. At the same time, however, the attentive listener would be encouraged to sense, if not imagine, Christ acting through the figure of the martyr.

The fact remains that, in his dream-state of mind, Concordius probably did see a venerable lady and a beautiful, powerful-looking male figure clad in white who told him he was cured. Seeing this empowering image would mean replicating its inherent pattern interiorly and thereby being interiorly assimilated to this vision of light, health, and power. This would have begun to change Concordius's body chemistry. As a coming into awareness of a process already ongoing, the words said are likely to have brought forth in Concordius's mind the inspiring image of himself as already cured — to which his body would have responded by imitating it physically. For this is exactly the kind of experience which the modern faith healer Agnes Sanford time and again describes as facts. Alongside intensive prayer, she insists, the subject must at the same time visualize the afflicted body part as

¹³⁴ As in the visions of Saturus (*Passio Perpetuae*, XII) and Jacobus (*Passio sanctorum Mariani et Jacobi*, VII. 3), in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. and trans. by Musurillo, p. 120, lines 19–21, p. 202, lines 31–33, p. 204, line 1. A similar very tall youth is seen by Cyprian in a dream vision: Pontius of Carthage (Pontius Diaconus), *Vita sancti Cypriani*, XII. 3, lines 16–19, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 32. Cf. Dierkens, 'Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines', pp. 31–36.

¹³⁵ *Acta Ioannis*, 88–90, in *Acta ap. apocr.*, ed. by Tischendorf, Lipsius, and Bonnet, II. 1, 194–95; *Apocr.*, trans. by Elliott, pp. 316–17.

¹³⁶ Victricius, *De laude*, XII, lines 26–27, 35, CCSL, 64, pp. 89, 90.

completely healthy and firmly believe that God is bringing it into that state at that very moment.¹³⁷ Today, numerous non-religious therapies too use focused mental imaging to cure disorders in the body.¹³⁸

An ostensibly insignificant detail — that of Concordius's tears — is in fact essential. Contemporary monastic literature describes the practice of prayer with tears of contrition as a purification of the heart.¹³⁹ Augustine would later speak to his community approvingly of praying to Stephen for a miracle 'with tears that somehow were not asking but, as I said, demanding'.¹⁴⁰ From a psychological point of view, however, tears break down defences and open the affective awareness to its own dynamics and to new impulses. The fact that tearful prayer is mentioned in almost every miracle in the Uzalís collection appears to be another unmistakable indication of the crucial fact that, as we saw, these miracles occurred in an altered, dreamlike or trance-like, state of consciousness that is more receptive to the affective power of images and symbols than the everyday common-sense consciousness.

Anxious to authenticate Concordius's cure more fully and to put it into its proper context, our author thereupon shows that it too is the fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy:

And at once upon the words of the one who commanded, as one who had heard while sleeping in the body but waking in the spirit [cf. Song of Songs 5. 2], he immediately jumped out of bed and began to walk before it with firm steps. And thus he fulfilled that word of the prophecy: 'And the cripple shall leap as the deer'.¹⁴¹

The dream, then, must be veridical. The quotation from Isaiah is part of a fuller description of the Lord's destruction of Israel's enemies and the subsequent future state of the Chosen People. Since parts of this psalm keep being adduced throughout the collection as prophecies which have been realized in the present, it looks as though its larger context may be another important key to our author's world view, if not also that of his community. The psalmist prophesies:

¹³⁷ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 22–24 and passim.

¹³⁸ See especially the chart in Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, pp. 152–53.

¹³⁹ John Cassian, *Collat.*, IX. 27–30, CSEL, 13, pp. 273–76. See Benke, *Die Gabe der Tränen*.

¹⁴⁰ Augustine, *Sermo* 324, PL, 38, col. 1447[C]: 'lacrimis quodam modo non petentibus, sed ut dixi, exigentibus'.

¹⁴¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 4, lines 31–34, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 282: 'At ille statim in sermone iubentis, tamquam qui obdormiens corpore, sed vigilans spiritu audisset, continuo de lecto exilivit, et ante lectulum suum firmis gressibus incedere coepit, ac sic verbum illud prophetiae implevit: "Et claudus saliet sicut cervus." Cf. Isaiah 35. 6.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
 the desert shall rejoice and blossom; [...]
 They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.
 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.
 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, fear not!
 Behold, your God will come with a vengeance,
 with the recompense of God.
 He will come and save you.'
 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
 And the ears of the deaf unstopped;
 then shall the lame man leap like a hart,
 and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. (Isaiah 35. 1–6)

It bespeaks the same atmosphere as the quotation from Joel: that of the last days before the Day of the Lord — as we saw, in the Christian understanding, Christ's Second Coming — with its attendant visions and miracles showing forth the glory of God, a phrase which our author keeps bringing up and which also figures prominently in Severus's letter. In whatever way the visionaries themselves experienced their visions, the Church leadership, through our author, places them firmly in this context. A similar expectation, if with different images, had occurred previously, as we saw, in Ambrose's sermon in 386,¹⁴² in 396 in Sulpicius's *Life of Saint Martin*,¹⁴³ and in Paulinus of Nola's writings around 400.¹⁴⁴ It is not explicitly referred to, however, in the reports of the finding of Stephen's relics in Jerusalem in 415. And Severus of Minorca's end times images concern conversion, not healing miracles. In Uzalis, it looks as though — whether intentionally stimulated by the Church authorities or not — the acceptance of the miraculous power of the newly arrived relics of the protomartyr Stephen is supported by an apocalyptic and visionary view of the present time as one in which miracles and visions were expected.

The story's conclusion, pointing the listeners to the proper etiquette after a cure, also indicates how Concordius's image of the healing martyr found its way among the community:

The morning thereafter he rose and hastened to give thanks to the martyrs at whose shrine the relics had been placed, and because of the length of the journey, he thought he needed a staff to support him. After he had prayed there for a long time and lighted candles, he left his staff there and, on his way back, carried his little son on his neck. Having come to the

¹⁴² Ambrose, *Epist.* 77. 9, lines 86–87, CSEL, 82. 3, p. 132.

¹⁴³ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXIV. 1–8, SC, 133, p. 306.

¹⁴⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, XVIII. 225–33, CSEL, 30, p. 126.

cathedral [in the city], he preached to all about the glory of God and of his Friend through the testimony of his [restored] health.

After this, the holy relics were installed in the cathedral with a great celebration and ceremony, as though a station of heavenly healing had been placed there. This is why we sang: 'We received, o Lord, your mercy in the midst of your temple.'¹⁴⁵

Concordius is said to have given thanks 'to the martyrs' — to Felix and Gennadius as well? Did he perhaps know about earlier cures of theirs, and was he assuming that they had cooperated with the newly arrived Stephen? The final quotation is from the same psalm from which our author quoted in the story of the first vision, again pointing to the end-times world view that the clerical community in Uzalis, at least, seems to have wished to propagate.

In the visionary stories that follow, the martyr heals again in various ways. As we shall see, they show very clearly that — usually after intensive prayer, tears, and self-humiliation — for these Christians, perceiving and being addressed and/or acted upon by a living image of a figure who is assumed to be the martyr resulted in a cure or other kind of empowerment. Stephen's 'station of heavenly healing' — perhaps an implicit allusion to Augustine's notion of 'Christus medicus'¹⁴⁶ — is thus likely to have filled a real need in the community.

'Woken Up by Faith': The Second Cure

The first miracle after the relics' translation to the main church of Uzalis — that of the lady baker Hilara — came about in a very different way, not in a vision but in what was almost certainly also an altered state of consciousness induced by concerted personal effort and great perseverance, in which tears and going without sleep played a central role. Its pattern anticipates those of the other miracles not involving visions. The author tells us that,

¹⁴⁵ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 4, lines 34–43, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 282–84: 'Deinde mane surgit, vota que sua martyribus, ubi eadem reliquiae susceptae sunt, reddere properavit. Quo propter itineris longitudinem baculo adhuc innitendum esse putavit. Ubi postquam diu oravit, cereos accendit, baculum dereliquit, atque exinde filium parvulum collo sustinens repedavit; in ecclesiam venit, et gloriam Dei atque amici eius perspicua sanitatis attestazione praedicavit. Post haec, reliquiis sanctis in ecclesia cum ingenti cel ebriitate ac sollemnitate collocatis, tanquam proposita statione divinae medicinae (unde cantavimus: "Suscepimus Deus misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui"), quanti ex illo multitudinis undique concursus fieri coepere!' Cf. Psalm 47. 10 (48. 9). On the shrine of Stephen in the city (the word used is *memoria*), see Duval, 'Monuments du culte d'Étienne à Uzalis', pp. 97–100. On the shrine or *memoria* in general, see Leclercq, 'Memoria'.

¹⁴⁶ Arbesmann, 'Concept of "Christus medicus" in St. Augustine'.

On the evening of the very day upon which the relics had been placed, covered with a veil, upon the [bishop's?] chair in the apse [of the cathedral], a certain blind woman named Hilara, well known to the citizens as a baker, [was] awoken by faith in so great a glory of the martyr and [did] not waver through any doubt of unbelief.¹⁴⁷

'Awoken by faith in so great a glory of the martyr' — this must have been Hilara's first transforming moment. The 'exciting' — arousing, wakening, reviving; *excitare* can mean all this — thing about this 'glory' must have been that of miracle being a real possibility, as had been manifested in those occurring on Minorca, described in Severus's letter, read that day to the community. Thus

she asked a certain religious woman to take her hand and lead her to the place from which she was confident of receiving light. When she had been led there by the hand of another, she grasped the covering placed over the relics with her wandering hand and at once applied it to each of her eyes.¹⁴⁸

The touching of the perceivedly power-laden relics, 'from which she was confident of receiving light', must have been the next transformational moment: an *ictus* or shock, initiating the slow healing process. The reading of Severus's letter in church — the presentation of a model of belief reality by an authority in a ritual context — had prepared her for this moment. We see here too the evidently already familiar notion of the transmission of healing power through physical contact¹⁴⁹ now being applied to the relics that had just arrived, authenticated by their 'glory'. Stephen's miracles before his martyrdom (were they mentioned during the installation ceremony?) and his association with Christ, as well as the knowledge of Christ's healing of the woman with the flow of blood through contact, mentioned by Victricius in this context,¹⁵⁰ are also likely to have been components in her confidence. Did she sense — or access, within herself or coming from without — an impulse of spiritual energy when, or after, she touched the cloth covering to her eyes? No vision of the saint encouraging or healing her is mentioned, and we hear only

¹⁴⁷ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 3, lines 3–6, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 276: 'Cum igitur eiusdem diei vespere in loco absidæ super cathedram velatam essent reliquiae constitutæ, mulier quædam nomine Hilara oculis capta, civibus nota panaria, excitata tantæ gloriæ martyris fide, et nulla incredulitatis dubitatione fluctuans.' Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, p. 182, report that positive expectations were an important factor in achieving medieval cures.

¹⁴⁸ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 3, lines 11–16, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 276: 'Rogavit quamdam feminam religiosam ut sibi manum daret, et se illuc duceret unde lucem se recepturam esse confideret. Quo cum alienæ manus auxilio deducta fuisset, pallam super reliquias positam manu errabunda comprehendit, statimque suis utrisque luminibus applicavit.'

¹⁴⁹ See on this Crook, *Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints*, pp. 31–32.

¹⁵⁰ Acts 6. 8; Victricius, *De laude*, II, lines 12–14, CCSL, 64, p. 72.

that she was 'already irradiated by the light of faith', which appears to mean that she was now completely sure that she would receive her sight. Evidently too, however, she already knew that to receive this she needed to persist in calling upon the saint, as well as upon Christ. In his stories of other miracles, our author later makes this notion explicit, citing Christ's well-known advice: 'Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives' (Matthew 7. 7–8). It is advice in focusing, and in building up and maintaining, a confidence that seeks to open up the body to healing. Accordingly,

When she had been guided back to her house, within the walls of her home too, she fought with the aid of Jesus — as though against the enemy Amalek — to overcome the darkness of her blindness through continuous prayer.¹⁵¹

As we saw, the image of fighting Amalek also occurs in Severus's letter as a metaphor for strenuous prayer, there combined with tears and hymn singing, for a very different purpose.¹⁵² Amalek or the 'Enemy' is almost certainly the Devil, who, as we shall see, becomes visible in later stories. He is evidently held responsible for Hilara's 'darkness' and is being combated here by invoking the spiritual power of Christ and his saint. Exorcism is thus one implicit model of this cure.

After part of the night had passed, she went to stand upon the threshold of her door (perhaps to get some fresh air) and slowly began to see. When she thereupon called her son to verify what she had seen, he at first did not believe her and then accused her of having feigned blindness. He was obviously someone who did not believe in miracles or relics. Our author rushes to explain to others like him how the cure could happen:

It is not to be wondered at that an animal-like man does not yet perceive the things that belong to the Spirit of God [I Corinthians 2. 14], not knowing what was once predicted: 'Then the eyes of the blind will be opened' [Isaiah 35. 5] [...]

But [Hilara], conscious of having in fact received the new light, gave thanks to the Friend of God: for not in vain had she sung to God: 'You will light my lamp, Lord, my God, you will brighten my darkness', and 'You [O God], illumining [me] wondrously from the eternal mountains'; for in this way her request was granted and she was illumined from the eternal mountains.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 3, lines 18–21, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 276: 'Quae cum domum suam fuisset reducta, et intra ipsos domesticos parietes ad evincendas caecitatis tenebras, quasi adversus Amalech hostem, adiuvante Iesu, continuata oratione pugnabat.' Cf. Exodus 17.

¹⁵² Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, 27. 5–7, ed. by Bradbury, p. 120, lines 16–25.

¹⁵³ Psalm 17. 29 (18. 28); II Samuel 22. 29; Psalm 75. 5. *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 3, lines 31–32, 33–37, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 278: 'Nec mirum si animalis homo nondum perciperet quae sunt

Our author is explaining the event as having been promised by the biblical prophecies in which illumination is a symbol of healing. But does he mean that the singing — and, no doubt, simultaneous mental imaging — of these passages was somehow instrumental in her receiving what she had sung about? Or only that knowledge of these sayings helped to create in her the absolute confidence that she would be healed? Or something more? The first quote is, of course, from the already-discussed passage of Isaiah about the new condition of God's chosen people. The two Psalm quotations, however, are in fact transformer images. They connect the then current notion of eye-light as rays shining outwards¹⁵⁴ with the image of a divine illumination within. Is our author perhaps also seeing a quasi-causal relation between singing (that is, affectively appropriating and internalizing), these images as an accessing of their powers so as to be illuminated by them? We cannot be sure. Although not mentioned there, these images — as well as, probably, others like that of Christ being the Light of the World (John 8. 12) — are likely to have been, however vaguely, in the back of Hilara's mind while she was strenuously and continuously praying, never doubting that she would now be healed. As we saw, Sanford, in her healing practice, too insisted not only that the prayer for healing needed to be accompanied by a visualization of the healing as though taking place in the exact place, but also that at the same time there should be a firm belief that God is acting there at that very moment.¹⁵⁵

Here as well as in our author's later report of the reading of the first book of the Uzalis miracles, Hilara's cure is highlighted as the one that is best known in the community, and thus as another prime model for subsequent ones. It looks as though our author assumed that remembering or imaging biblical passages with relevant symbolism was somehow instrumental too in the miracles in which no vision had been reported. The subsequent miracles without visions, interspersed with visionary ones, involve similar supplication procedures and consist of further cures of blindness and paralysis, a liberation from prisoners' chains, the safe return of loved ones, a temporary resurrection from death (so as to be baptized), and the restoration of spoiled wine. In the latter, Moses's miracle at Lake Mara is referred

Spiritus Dei, ignorans quod olim praedictus esset: "Tunc aperientur oculi caecorum." [...] conscia perceptae novae lucis, ut veritas habebat, amico Christi gratias agebat quoniam non frustra Deo cantabat: "Tu illuminabis lucernam meam, Domine, Deus meus, illuminabis te nebras meas" et "Illuminans tu mirabiliter a montibus aeternis", quae sic de montibus aeternis exaudita et illuminata.'

¹⁵⁴ As in Augustine, *De Gen.*, XII. 16, CSEL, 28. 1, p. 401, lines 13–15: 'lux primum per oculos sola diffunditur emicatque in radiis oculorum ad visibilia contuenda'.

¹⁵⁵ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 25–26.

to, as well as Christ's at Cana.¹⁵⁶ As we shall see, elsewhere too silent congruences with similar miracles of Christ show through.¹⁵⁷

'A Certain Young Man, Shining in a White Robe': An Out-of-body Experience

The next visible appearance of the martyr is in the sixth story. A man, Dativus, crushed by the collapse of his house and lying unconscious, suddenly opened his eyes and slowly returned to life after his wife had prostrated herself at the shrine and, with tears, 'aliquandiu ad aures amici Dei fide pulsaret' (had knocked for a long time in faith [upon the door, to gain] the hearing of the Friend of God).¹⁵⁸ He later relates how, in a vision, he had found himself among the dead.¹⁵⁹ Then a certain young man (*iuvē[is]*) entered, shining in a white robe (*candida veste nitente*) and dressed as a deacon, who commanded the other dead to go away.¹⁶⁰ Here the martyr is for the first time explicitly described as youthful. As already indicated, this was a traditional characteristic of the pagan gods, who enjoyed eternal youth in their heavenly abode. Then the white-robed figure approached Dativus and told him to give back what he had received: 'Redde quod accepisti'. After being told three times, finally understanding what was asked of him, Dativus recited the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The deacon thereupon made the sign of the Cross over him and said: 'Surge, iam salvus' (Arise. You are healed)¹⁶¹ — words resembling those of Christ — upon which Dativus recovered consciousness. Was this man a catechumen who had not yet been baptized and was the martyr making him a full member of the church before healing him? The young man in white, again resembling the risen Christ or an angel, now comes across more than before as a commanding figure of authority in heaven.

¹⁵⁶ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 3, lines 42–44, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 336–38. Cf. Exodus 15. 25, John 2. 9.

¹⁵⁷ Devallet, 'Thèmes et structures du récit', p. 166.

¹⁵⁸ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 6, lines 8–9, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 286.

¹⁵⁹ See Fraïsse, 'Pour une typologie des récits de miracles dans le *De miraculis*', p. 174; van Uytfanghe, 'Les *Visiones* du très haut Moyen Âge et les recentes "expériences de mort temporaire". Première partie', pp. 447–48; and van Uytfanghe, 'Les *Visiones* du très haut Moyen Âge et les recentes "expériences de mort temporaire"'. For a modern assessment by a heart surgeon, see van Lommel, *Eindeloos bewustzijn*.

¹⁶⁰ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 6, lines 15–19, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 288.

¹⁶¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 6, lines 20–26, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 288. Cf. for instance Matthew 9. 5, Mark 2. 9, Luke 5. 24.

The next visions are warnings, not cures. Two priests are told not to let the Bishop translate part of the relics to another church. This time, the appearance of the martyr is not described. Neither priest, at that moment, told or dared to tell the Bishop about his dream. Two days later, while the vehicle for carrying the relics was being prepared, they did tell him in the presence of an angry crowd, which thereupon forced the Bishop to abandon his plan and even to bring back the part of the relics which he had already placed elsewhere. The author interprets this as a prevention of divisiveness in the community, especially since, as he says, all this happened in a church which had previously belonged to the Donatists and was ‘in hodiernum unitati Catholicae est restituta’ (restored into the present Catholic unity).¹⁶² This story appears to show that the people themselves too wished to experience the martyr’s undivided presence in the main church of the city as their own unity, and that visions — on the part of authority figures, and when supported by the community — could influence even the action of the ecclesiastical establishment.

‘Elegant in Bearing’: Following Dream Instructions

The next vision is that of the crippled blacksmith Restitutus, from another city, who had also lost his power of speech; he was brought to the martyr’s shrine at his own request.¹⁶³ Although it was winter, Restitutus spent many days praying while lying on the cold mosaic floor of what was probably the chapel containing Stephen’s shrine.¹⁶⁴ This may be the first evidence of Christian incubation on the model of that traditionally occurring in the temples of Asclepius, but perhaps also already in churches of Saints Cosmas and Damian.¹⁶⁵ But Restitutus appears to be increasing his discomfort intentionally by lying on the cold floor, contrary to the usual therapies for this ailment, as our author points out. After about twenty days of this torture, ‘he said that there appeared to him in a dream a certain youth, beautifully dressed and elegant in bearing’,¹⁶⁶ who, surprisingly, commanded him to walk on his own two feet up to the elevated place where the shrine was. In other

¹⁶² *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 7, lines 32–33, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 292.

¹⁶³ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 11, lines 6–7, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 296.

¹⁶⁴ See Duval, ‘Monuments du culte d’Étienne à Uzalis’.

¹⁶⁵ Dulaey, *Le Rêve dans la vie et la pensée de Saint Augustin*, pp. 186–88.

¹⁶⁶ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 11, lines 10–11, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 296: ‘per somnium noctu apparuisse sibimet indicavit quemdam iuvenili forma praeditum, speciosa etiam veste et habitu decorum’.

words, he is ordered to believe in his cure and to exert himself to bring it about — presumably repeating the walk at least once every day. After this, not only his mobility but also his voice slowly began to improve.

I would suggest that what we see in this remarkable story is someone who — consciously or not — transgressed his normal everyday state of mind through extreme physical hardship. As in death and rebirth rituals in traditional societies, this cure may have taken place — albeit gradually — in a liminal or trance state that produced a cathartic abreaction, releasing whatever energy sources were blocked and thereby restoring Restitutus's connection with his vital source or health. His cultural conditioning made him experience this as a command by and support from an inspiring image of a beautiful youth in a precious robe. But the saint's perceived elegance is also likely to have reflected what was in this period increasingly being imagined as the heavenly court.¹⁶⁷ In the apocryphal Acts of Peter, however, Christ already appears in a beautiful robe.¹⁶⁸ The visionary images of the martyr, then, appear to point to the martyr's assimilation to Christ. Restitutus's affective assimilation to the dynamic and beautiful image he saw is likely not only to have given him confidence but also to have transformed his image of himself and thereby inspired his body to conform. When, after four months of gradual improvement but not yet full recovery, he considered going home, another dream (not further described) told him not to hurry but to stay for another four months to be completely healed — which happened just as foretold. His persistent confidence in the martyr conquered whatever had been afflicting him.

'My Lord of Uzalis': A New Heavenly Patron

In the next vision, the last one in book one, we see the martyr restoring someone's peace of mind and now explicitly being perceived as the city's heavenly patron. An Uzalis butcher named Rusticianus was suffering intense anxieties that his son, whom he had sent away on a long-distance business trip, had been killed by brigands along with his servant. As he slept at night,

¹⁶⁷ Evident already in Arborius's vision of Martin with heavenly jewels: Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 10. 6, SC, 510, p. 328.

¹⁶⁸ *Acta Petri cum Simone*, 16, in *Acta ap. apocr.*, ed. by Tischendorf, Lipsius, and Bonnet, I, 62, lines 20–21; *Apocr.*, trans. by Elliott, p. 410.

he saw appearing to him in a dream a certain beautiful young man who had the face and bearing of one of the most prominent notables of the city, named 'of Uzalis', who asked him with a kind face: 'Why are you weeping?' [...]

[After the butcher had communicated his worry about his son and his companions,] he replied, 'They have not been killed. But who am I?' [Rusticianus] answered: 'My lord of Uzalis'. 'Well said,' he answered, 'for I am of Uzalis, but I am not the one you think. For I am Stephen.'¹⁶⁹

And he told him that his son was safe and would arrive soon with good business profits, which happened as foretold. Here we see a transformation from anxiety to trust. Stephen assumes the appearance of the man who is presumably the current secular patron of the city and says that he has fact — invisibly — taken over from him. It is another indication, now in someone who is not highly educated, of people's assumption in this period that invisible entities — in this case, not demons or the Devil, but the saint himself — could act not only through objects such as relics but even through living, familiar persons. However, that a divine being could act through humans was an ancient motif, in the Bible (the three 'strangers' visiting Abraham at Mamre) as well as in pagan literature (Homer).¹⁷⁰ In book one of the Uzalis collection, the whole progression of the saint's image from bits of dust to the patron of the city is so clearly and neatly shown that one cannot help suspecting clerical influence in the interpretation of the visions and/or significant editorializing by the author. However, as we saw, the description of the reading of the first book's stories to the community on the saint's feast, described in the prologue to the second book, seems to indicate that everyone, including the visionaries themselves, accepted the written version as veridical.

'A Smiling and Serene Face': Falling in Love with One's Spiritual Doctor?

The format of book two, ostensibly by the same author,¹⁷¹ lends itself better to individual than to public reading; it contains fewer and much longer stories. That

¹⁶⁹ *Mirac. Steph.*, I. 14, lines 12–15, 17–20, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 300–02: 'ecce per somnium videt sibimet apparere quemdam decoru m iuvenem, cuiusdam honorati et primarii civitatis viri, nomine Uzalensis, vultum habitumque praeferentem, eum que hilari facie sibi dixisse: "Quid ploras?" [...] At ille consolans eum ait ill i: "Non sunt occisi. Tamen qui sum ego?", inquit; iste respondit: "Dominus meus Uzalensis". "Bene", ait ille, "dixisti, quia Uzalensis sum, sed non sum ipse quem putas. Ego enim sum Stephanus."'

¹⁷⁰ Genesis 18. 1–2, and see Fox, *Pagan and Christians*, esp. pp. 104–05.

¹⁷¹ Meyers, 'Citations bibliques dans le *De miraculis*', p. 154.

of the noble Christian lady Megetia of Carthage is by far the longest and most detailed in the collection. I am concentrating on the main storyline of her double cure; the embedded substory of how this ultimately brought about her male relatives' conversion reveals our author's apologetic intent.¹⁷² As will be seen, Megetia's cure can be read as a kind of love story of this apparently very young lady, married to a pagan (who was, in the end, converted), for her beautiful Christian spiritual doctor, Stephen, in which after a great deal of focused effort she finally finds her true self and, with this, her health.

In the fourth month of her pregnancy, because of her frequent attacks of nausea, Megetia's jaw became paralysed in a distended state so that she could not properly talk or eat. Ashamed to be seen in this repulsive state — and, I suspect, feeling rejected by her husband — she began to wear a veil. The doctors tried everything but could not help her; they even made things worse. In this period, girls tended to be married very young and not seldom by family arrangement.¹⁷³ Not only were their bodies then not yet ready for childbearing, but obstetrical care too was abysmal in this period: an estimated one-third to one-half of births ended in the death of the mother.¹⁷⁴ Our author, however, inserts a moral lesson by commenting that Megetia's state was 'nec immerito' (not undeserved) for

God, the Creator and Restorer of all nature had not yet re-formed that which can be formed only by his power, all human bodies being fettered by his censure and discipline, and released by his remedy.¹⁷⁵

Since she was already a Christian, Megetia's condition is here evidently regarded as a punishment for sin,¹⁷⁶ and as the story shows, she is ultimately healed only after confessing this sin and thereby being forgiven. In its own idiom, what the author is saying here is that the condition of the mind is directly related to that of the body. Further on, the author again insists that 'the One who deigned to create is the One

¹⁷² *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 310–32.

¹⁷³ See Veyne, 'The Roman Empire', pp. 33–49.

¹⁷⁴ Benseddik, 'Pratique médicale en Afrique au temps d'Augustin', p. 666. See also Hamdoune, 'La Vie quotidienne à Uzalis', p. 125.

¹⁷⁵ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 1, lines 27–29, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 312: 'ab illo enim conditore et correctore omnis naturae Deo nondum in illa reformabatur, quod non nisi eius virtute formatur, cuius censura omne hominis corpus et disciplina constringitur et medicina laxatur'.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Vannier, 'L'Image du Christ médecin chez les Pères', p. 527. As will be seen, Augustine points to the same view when he associates Palladia's cure with Psalm 31 (32). 5 about confession and the forgiveness of sin (*Sermo* 323b. 4, PL, 38, col. 1446[C]).

who also deigned to heal'.¹⁷⁷ As will be seen, in some of its details Megetia's gradual cure very much resembles Augustine's view of the healing of the heart's eyes through the adhesion to Christ as the doctor-saviour, who would remove the dust obstructing them.¹⁷⁸ The doctor image of Christ also appears in the Acts of Thomas.¹⁷⁹ In the Uzalis story, we see variations upon the themes of the eyes of the heart, as well as of light and fighting the Enemy, which figured in Hilara's cure.

In the sixth month of Megetia's pregnancy, possibly because her young body was not ready for childbearing, the foetus in her died, and she was expected to die as a consequence; for although her pagan male family members enlisted the help of doctors and even 'the arts of demons and fictions of superstitious emptinesses',¹⁸⁰ no one seemed to be able to extract it from her. While the pagan men were labouring in vain, the author tells us, God inspired the pious Christian Vitula, Megetia's mother, to go to the Friend of the Lord, Stephen, at Uzalis to ask for his intercession. We are thereupon given verbatim her lengthy petition to the martyr, accompanied by her tears; it must be an invention by our author, and its purpose was almost certainly to be a model for future requests to the martyr. And 'when [...] she had sufficiently instructed her suitable advocate at [the court of] the judge Christ', Stephen, to examine her daughter quickly,¹⁸¹ she left and took some oil from the shrine with her, as well as her handkerchief, moistened by her many tears. The oil is likely to have been that of the lamps near the shrine; its efficacy in transmitting a nearby relic's holy power was then well established.¹⁸² As in Hilara's case, the pressure exerted upon the heavenly martyr is considerable — a trait that recurs in the description of other miracles. When Vitula had returned home and found her daughter teetering on the brink between life and death, she anointed all her limbs with the blessed oil and placed the handkerchief moistened by her tears on her

¹⁷⁷ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 1, line 48, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 312: 'Qui dignatus est creare, ipse prorsus dignatus est et sanare'.

¹⁷⁸ See Blanchard, 'Le Christ médecin et la relecture augustinienne du prologue johannique', pp. 493–95.

¹⁷⁹ *Acta Thomae*, 37, in *Acta ap. apocr.*, ed. by Tischendorf, Lipsius, and Bonnet, II. 2, 154–55; *Apocr.*, trans. by Elliott, p. 463.

¹⁸⁰ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 1, lines 41–42, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 312: 'artes daemoniorum ac superstitiosarum figmenta vanitatum'.

¹⁸¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 2, lines 71–72, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 314: 'ubi satis visa est sibi idoneum instruxisse advocatum Stephanum sanctum apud iudicem Christum'.

¹⁸² Crook, *Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints*, pp. 28–31.

daughter's chest. Thereupon she was delivered of her dead infant and herself returned to life.

The 'archiat[er] caelesti[s]' (heavenly doctor),¹⁸³ however, now still had the lady's other ailment, her dislocated jaw, to attend to. To make this possible, Vitula wanted to take her daughter with her to Uzalis 'ad vitalis fontis venam' (to the opening of the fount of life) — another image associated with Christ (cf. John 4. 14; Psalm 35. 10 (36. 9)) — from where she might bring her ailing daughter a drink. But the journey was postponed until Megetia should have more fully recovered. After a well-known doctor had assured her that he could not cure Megetia's jaw, Vitula went to her husband and to Megetia's husband, pointed to all the ineffect ive efforts of their doctors, and begged to be allowed to go with her daughter 'ad medicum nostrum' (to our doctor). Our author reports, almost gleefully, that the men could not resist 'tali feminae virili animo indutae' (so manly a soul worn by a woman).¹⁸⁴ He says that they preferred to give way of their own accord, rather than be forced to do so overcome by the judgement of another. It is unclear who is meant here.

Vitula and Megetia now travelled to the martyr's shrine in Uzalis with their husbands' consent. There they prostrated themselves before the sacred threshold, wearing filthy goats' hair shirts sprinkled with ashes, further humiliating themselves by weeping and crying out in supplication day and night. Apparently, however, there were unbelievers who harassed them. Vitula insistently prayed to the martyr to confound them by healing her daughter's jaw and through this to heal their hearts' eyes and save their souls. When they had persisted in prayer for seven days, Megetia had a number of dream visions whose specific details are worth quoting. Because it seems to be the catalyst of her eventual recovery, I shall here italicize every description of the saint's appearance:

behold, suddenly in the middle of the night, Megetia was visited through a dream: she saw appearing to her by a vision *a distinguished man with the appearance of a deacon*. She began to ask him, as some *spiritual doctor*, to look at her jaw and, if she was deserving, to cure it. But when he had seen her jaw, he said immediately, looking at her with *a smiling and serene face*:

'Indeed, your jaw is not yet straight. But look above you, and see what is flying over your head!'

Looking up at once, Megetia saw a certain hideous serpent flying above her by flapping feathered wings, and wandering here and there in tortuous windings. Frightened by the

¹⁸³ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 2, line 91, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 316.

¹⁸⁴ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 3, lines 130–31, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 318.

vision of the horrible monster, Megetia was strengthened by the advice of that *distinguished man*, who said to her:

‘Unless you first kill this serpent, you will not be able to get well. But don’t be afraid, approach him with a strong soul and you will overcome him completely.’

When Megetia had heard this, strengthened by her faith and armed with the *protection to her of an aid so great*, and taking up at once what seemed to be a stick offered to her, she fought with the most hideous and tortuous dragon. After she had fought for a long time and had long been wearied by the fierce adversary, when she finally hit him on the head, he immediately fell on his face.¹⁸⁵

Paulinus of Nola had given an idealized and spiritualized description of his imagined Felix;¹⁸⁶ Megetia is the first to give a fuller description of a martyr’s face as seen in a vision. Possibly, it is inspired by the description in Acts in which, as we saw, Stephen’s face is said to be as though the face of an angel (Acts 6. 15). The dragon is, of course, a well-known symbol of Satan.¹⁸⁷ In the Acts of Thomas there is a substantial story about the appearance of an adversarial dragon;¹⁸⁸ we shall see him reappear later, much magnified, in a vision by all the citizens of Uzalis.

Since, upon waking, Megetia did not fully understand the meaning of her dream vision, she prayed to be visited (*visitari*) again, and after she had fallen asleep,

behold, again she saw that *young man of beautiful appearance, shining in a white robe*. At once, it seemed to her that he extended his hand to her as she laid on her bed, and she heard him commanding and saying:

‘Get up [out of bed], this is how you will be cured.’

¹⁸⁵ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 6, lines 180–96, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 322–24: ‘ecce nocte intempesta visitatur per somnium Megetia: videt apparentem sibi insignem visu virum, diaconi praeferentem habitum. Illa eum rogare coepit, velut quemdam medicum spiritalem, ut os suum inspiceret, et si dignaretur, curaret. Verum ille mox ut os eius inspexit, vultu eam hilari serenoque intuitus ait: “Equidem adhuc os tuum non rectum; sed sursum aspice, et vide quid volitet supra caput tuum.” Continuo illa super se oculos erigens vidit serpentem quemdam taeterrimum supra se pennarum remigio volitantem, atque huc et illuc tortuosis anfractibus oberrantem. At pavefacta Megetia horribili monstuosoque visu, insignis illius viri exhortatione firmatur, ad se ipsam dicentis: “Nisi prius istum serpentem occideris, sanari non poteris. Sed noli metuere, forti animo illi congregere, et omnino superabis.” Quo audito, Megetia fidei suae robore et de tanti adiutorii sui armata protectione, arrepta in tempore sibimet velut virga oblata, contra illum draconem taeterrimum et tortuosissimum decertavit. Quem, etsi diu exercita diuque ab reluctantante adversario delassata, ad extremum tamen ubi illum in capite percussit, continuo prostravit.’

¹⁸⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, xv. 173–76, CSEL, 30, pp. 58–59.

¹⁸⁷ Budd, ‘Dragon’; Palli, ‘Drache’, I, cols 516–21.

¹⁸⁸ *Acta Thomae* 31–32, in *Acta ap. apocr.*, ed. by Tischendorf, Lipsius, and Bonnet, II. 1, 147–49; *Apocr.*, trans. by Elliott, pp. 461–62.

But Megetia, as she had been accustomed to do previously with the human doctors, inclined her head towards him and offered her jaw as if to be stroked by his hands. He, however, as though correcting the deed of an ignorant person, answered her:

'Why do you do this? First your eyes should be cured.' She replied: 'My lord, I have healthy eyes, but I ask you to cure my jaw.' And he said: 'I already told you that your eyes should first be cured.' Then, *like a heavenly doctor*, looking with his spirit into the secret places of her heart, he seemed to put a medicinal ointment on her skin, anointed her eyes, and left.¹⁸⁹

Megetia is told to get up out of her bed. Our author does not explain here. Is it a call to action? Up to now it has been her mother who has initiated everything. Is she being urged to take responsibility and act for herself? There may be a reminiscence here of Jerome's speaking of Christ as a doctor 'scrutinizing the secrets of illnesses'.¹⁹⁰ What did it all mean? The next morning, when Megetia told her dream to those around her at the shrine she suddenly remembered a sin which she had not yet confessed and did so at once. Our author comments:

Behold, therefore, which eyes were first to be healed in her: not in the least those of the body, but those of the heart — as the *spiritual doctor*, the glorious Stephen had said [...]. To be healed, therefore, was the hidden vice in her mind, so that after this that which was seen to be wrong in the body would also be healed. That is also why that most hideous serpent, who was flying above her head because he held the main mind of her rational soul captive, was to be ground underfoot and overcome. For while the guilt of each sin is humbly acknowledged, the head of the monster is smashed by the penitence, and the eyes of the heart are cleansed by confession.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 6, lines 199–208, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 324: 'Ecce denuo videt illum decorum habitu iuvenem, nivea veste fulgentem, ac statim, iacenti sibimet velut manu porrecta, audit iubentem pariterque dicentem: "Surge, sic curaris." At vero Megetia, ut ante medico homini facere consueverat, capite opposito, quasi fovenda ora sua eius manibus offerebat. Sed ille, utpote ignorantis corrigens factum, resp. ondit eidem: "Ut quid hoc facis? Prius sunt tibi oculi curandi." Illa retulit dicens: "Domine meus, oculos sanos habeo, sed ut os meum cures rogo." Et ille: "Iam, inquit, tibi dixi, prius sunt in te oculi curandi." Tunc, velut caelestis archiater, spiritu secreta cordis introspectans, quasi cute in medicinale collyrium imposuit, oculos super linivit, atque discessit.'

¹⁹⁰ Jerome, *De evangelio Marci*, I. 29–30, lines 15–16, SC, 494, p. 116: 'Novit diligenter venas tangere et morborum arcana scrutari'; reference cited in Vannier, 'L'Image du Christ médecin chez les Pères', p. 530.

¹⁹¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 6, lines 213–21, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 326: 'Ecce ergo qui illi erant oculi prius curandi, non utique corporis, sed cordis: quod, ut spiritalis medicus, gloriosus Stephanus praenuntiavit illi dicens: "Prius sunt tibi oculi curandi." Sanandum quippe erat quod vitiatum latebat in mente, ut sic demum sanaretur et quod depravatum cernebatur in corpore. Hinc ille quoque taeterrimus serpens, qui supra caput volitabat, quia principalem rationalis animae mentem

Despite all this, however, the cure had not yet taken place. Megetia then became more insistent:

On the twelfth day, therefore, after she had come to the Friend of God with her mother, while she prayed at the place of sacred memory, pounding [heaven's doors] with the piety of her faith, not only by the movement of her heart but also with the movement of her body, she pushed open a window in the shrine and, exerting violence upon the kingdom of God, put her head inside and placed it on top of the casket of the holy relics, washing and watering everything there with her tears. And behold, in truth, the One above who has compassion upon and approaches those who have pierced their hearts [Psalm 146 (147). 3], Megetia, the handmaiden of God, felt *a certain hand that she could see and touch stroking her*, straightening and caressing her jaw.¹⁹²

Megetia, preceded and apparently mobilized by her mother, not only humiliated herself but also reached out very, very hard towards her image of the caring martyr for her healing. She appears to have needed his reassurance to believe in herself. She is the first and only one to describe what she experienced as the martyr's touch. But again, images — the dragon, beating it down, the saint as a doctor applying an ointment to her eyes, the seeing and feeling of a stroking hand — appear to bring the experience of these dynamic affective patterns into consciousness and at the same time precipitate their intensification. The author regards them as the real truth behind the merely visible events of confession. Although it is clear that the religious women at the shrine to whom she told her dreams helped her to interpret her experiences, the quality of her transforming experience would seem to have come close to what Drewermann so beautifully explains as the transforming effect of the woman's touching the hem of Jesus's robe:

Can a single touch effect so much? Certainly, if one considers that acts and gestures can be experienced as intensely as, for instance, a shimmer in the eyes in the enchantment of love. Often at a first encounter a single look can become the answer for a whole life, and human eyes can become as a lake in whose waves heaven mirrors itself, or as windows opening into eternity. The touch of a hand or the stroking of its fingers can have a similar effect, if they

obtaineat, conterendus fuerat et vincendus. Dum enim reatus cuiusque delicti humiliter agnoscitur, caput colubri paenitendo quassatur, cordis oculus confitendo purgatur.'

¹⁹² *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 6, lines 222–29, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 326: 'Duodecimo igitur die ex quo cum sua ad amicum Dei Megetia venerat matre, dum orat ad locum sacrata memoriae, pulsans fidei pietate, non solum affectu cordis, verum etiam motu corporis, ipsa ostiola memoriae impulsa patefecit, ac vim faciens regno Dei, ea put suum interius intromisit, et super cubile sanctorum reliquiarum confixit, lacrimisque suis omnia illic lavit atque rigavit. Verum ecce illo desuper miserante qui appropinquat contribulatis corde, Megetia famula Dei quadam sibi visibili et attrahibili manu os suum co rrigi et compalpari persensit.'

are tender enough to cause the soul of the other to light up in the beauty of his or her body and, if he or she is pure enough, to give him back the feeling of his or her original innocence.¹⁹³

Although all these images had been imprinted upon her heart, her jaw was not yet cured. When Megetia and her mother were then called back to Carthage, and on their way there, something else occurred in a miraculous way. A curious maidservant, who had not believed in the possibility of Megetia's cure, was converted to the faith by seeming to see her jaw already healed; the author calls it 'magnum mysterium Dei' (a great mystery of God); and when she had returned home, her husband too was finally converted by seeing 'quod divina virtus in [eam] demonstrabat' (what the divine power showed in [her]).¹⁹⁴ Was it a prophetic vision of the jaw already healed? Were people in this period prophetic, or so attentive to their (wishful) imaginings that these mental images sometimes overlaid the incoming sensory data? It seems to me that this may have been the moment that, as described by Drewermann, she began to be spiritually ready towards her husband, who — crucially — now finally shared her faith, to 'light up in the beauty of her body'.

After this — it was then Easter time — she kept praying day and night and ingested a bit of blessed oil before all other food. On a certain night,

she was visited during her sleep, so that she thought she was standing next to the shrine of the blessed Stephen, and saw that *beautiful youth there, suffused with white light and riding on a distinguished horse, preceded by a splendid parade of lighted torches and lamps*. He said to her in a clear voice:

'That light is yours, Megetia; take it.'¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 290: 'Kann eine einzige Berührung so viel bewirken? Gewiss, wenn man sich vorstellt, das Gesten und Gebärden ebenso intensiv empfunden werden können wie z.B. der Schimmer der Augen in der Verzauberung der Liebe. Oft schon bei einer ersten Begegnung kann ein einzelner 'Augenblick' zur Antwort für ein ganzes Leben werden, und die Augen eines Menschen können sein wie ein See, in dessen Wellen der Himmel sich spiegelt, oder wie Fenster, die sich öffnen zur Ewigkeit. Ähnlich kann die Art eines Händedruckes oder das Streicheln von Fingern wirken, wenn sie zärtlich genug sind, um die Seele des anderen in der Schönheit seines Leibes zum Leuchten zu bringen, und wenn sie rein genug sind, einem Menschen das Gefühl für seine ursprüngliche Unschuld zurückzugeben.'

¹⁹⁴ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 7, line 254, and 2. 8, line 260, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 328 and 330, respectively.

¹⁹⁵ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 2. 9, lines 275–80, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 330: 'Quadam vero nocte visitatur in somnis, ita ut se iuxta memoriam beati martyris stantem putaret, ibique iuvenem illum speciosum cerneret, candida lucem perfusum et insigni equo subvectum, lampadesque complures lucentes ac praecedens ei splendidissimum apparatus, sibi ab eodem clara voce dictum: "Ad te pertinet ista lux, Megetia, suscipe illam."'

She woke up and found herself now finally healed. The image of the saint on a horse resembles that of the soldier-saint Menas.¹⁹⁶ The lighted torch, however, resembles that in the Acts of Thomas carried by a youth in a vision after the baptismal anointing, understood to be the 'seal' of Christ.¹⁹⁷ There may also be a certain reminiscence of the Eleusinian flaming torch as a symbol of purification and exorcism of demonic spirits.¹⁹⁸ For those acquainted with this story, the image of Stephen would appear to overlap with that of Christ. Is the light understood to be that of the heart's eyes through which her physical cure, as indicated at the beginning of the story, was thought to have been effected? A century and a half later, Gregory of Tours would describe numerous experiences of light in miraculous cures.¹⁹⁹ These also occur outside a religious framework today, however. A present-day psychotherapist reports that modern patients cured through imaging therapies have described experiences of being suffused with light or of seeing a globe of light.²⁰⁰ The delay between Megetia's confession and her cure parallels the time and effort modern patients too often need to effect theirs through what is described as very hard work. Megetia's spiritual 'purification' and resulting self-empowerment through the enacted visions also appears to have taken time to filter down to her body. For she too had in fact been instructed by the martyr how to heal herself.

The dream cures we have looked at are of more than antiquarian interest. For evidence of present-day cures through dreams (to mention only those) of the Italian monk-priest Padre Pio (real name, Francesco Forgione) of Pietrelcina OFM Cap. (1887–1968), who bore the stigmata since 1918 and was canonized in 2002, indicates that the same kind of visual patterns still function as locators, transmitters, and/or activators of a powerful healing energy. I have not carried out personal investigations about these stories but take them, like the late antique stories, to be accurate reports of what their narrators sincerely believe they have experienced — and is there anything other than human truth? In these personal testimonies it is sometimes a close relative to whom the then still living priest appears. Thus a father who could not pay for medical treatment writes that when his little son had for the second time fallen seriously ill with influenza, he dreamed that Padre Pio appeared

¹⁹⁶ Delehaye, 'Invention des reliques', p. 130. Cf. Leclercq, 'Ménas (saint)'.

¹⁹⁷ *Acta Thomae* 27, in *Acta ap. apocr.*, ed. by Tischendorf, Lipsius, and Bonnet, II. 2, 142–43; *Apocr.*, trans. by Elliott, p. 458.

¹⁹⁸ Hahn, 'Light, Shine, Lamp', pp. 484–85.

¹⁹⁹ See de Nie, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower*, pp. 193–207.

²⁰⁰ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, p. 104.

to him 'in a luminous form and with a radiant face, and said [...] "I have cured your child of a very grave malady"'.²⁰¹ The next morning his son felt so well that he wanted to go to school.

However, a farmer's daughter of twenty-one years, who had been ill, hugely inflated for seven years with a condition that sounds like extreme dropsy, herself saw Padre Pio in a dream — she recognized him from a photograph that stood on her desk — telling her that doctors could not cure her, but that she must hope and trust that heaven would help her. At the time, she understood this to mean that she would soon die. So she asked to be carried to the chapel to pray; she was carried back to her room unconscious. There, however, she suddenly opened her eyes, sat up in bed, and said that, shortly before, Padre Pio had said to her in the name of God: 'You are cured. Get up! Come immediately to the monastery. I want to bless you and thank the Almighty with you' — which she did, fully healed.²⁰²

A last story which I shall adduce here is that of a four-year-old boy severely ill with bronchitis and meningitis, whose mother testifies that after having repeatedly called upon Padre Pio to cure him, and kissed a photograph of him, he prayed to the little doll representing the Jesus child in the Nativity scene beside his bed — it being Christmas — and asked him to cure him. The next day the doctor declared him completely well. When asked what he had seen on Christmas Eve when he had asked the Child to heal him, he said: 'I saw the Infant Jesus on the chest of drawers, dressed in white and with a flower at his feet. I said: "Baby Jesus make me well [...]". And he answered: "I will make you well", and then the angel brought him back to the crib.'²⁰³ These naive modern testimonies are extremely enlightening, because they are often very detailed reports in letters written by the healed subjects themselves or by someone close to them, and are not infrequently authenticated by appended doctors' reports.

'A Seeing Faith': Daytime Apparitions

The two last stories in the collection show that the Uzalian people's 'oculata fide[s]' (seeing faith)²⁰⁴ had progressed beyond dreaming cures and seeing the promises of healing which they had heard about in the Bible materializing in their

²⁰¹ Carty, *Padre Pio, the Stigmatist*, p. 179.

²⁰² Carty, *Padre Pio, the Stigmatist*, pp. 171–72.

²⁰³ Carty, *Padre Pio, the Stigmatist*, pp. 191–95.

²⁰⁴ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 1, line 14, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 306.

own and others' bodies. They were now also seeing the martyr act and even become visible in daytime waking life.

'A New Countenance, Bright and Shining': Empowerment through Seeing Stephen's Face

Leaving the next story in the collection for last for reasons which will become apparent, we come now to the last one, the empowerment and rescue of a citizen of Carthage. It repeats Stephen's dream coalescence with a recognizable living person of authority, the 'lord of Uzalis', but now in the everyday waking world of the judicial court. And his kind and shining face, only later identified as his, is perceived to replace the severe one of the older assessor judge. We saw that this was an ancient motif.²⁰⁵ In the next story, too, we will see that a strange merchant who came by the city with a significant item for sale is regarded as having been an angel in disguise. The martyr too, then, can now be expected to act through the opaque flesh of apparently ordinary human beings.

Florentius, the dispenser of public monies of the city of Carthage was accused — the author suggests, unjustly — of a capital offence, and upon the proconsul's command, he was summarily seized and brought to him while he was judging cases in court, with the agents of the customary judicial torture standing ready. Everyone present began to fear for Florentius's life when the proconsul began to lash out at him with accusations. As for Florentius himself, 'the terrified man's mind having left him out of fear, he could not find what to say nor what to respond'.²⁰⁶ However, our author assures his readers, God, looking down from heaven and dispensing the heavenly kind of justice,

this very Lord God sent his angel as a man to liberate him, the angel of which has been written: 'The angel of the Lord will surround those who fear him, and will liberate them' [Psalm 33. 8 (34. 7)]. For when the dispenser, unsure of his life and doubtful of it on account of so great a fear of the terrible power [of the proconsul], stood before the inquisitors, he suddenly felt a tap on his back. Immediately turning his neck a bit, and covertly looking backwards, he saw what seemed to be one of the executioners standing around him suggesting to him what he should do and to whom he should plead, saying and admonishing him: 'Call upon the holy Stephen!'²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Fox, *Pagan and Christians*, esp. pp. 104–05.

²⁰⁶ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 5, lines 20–21, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 348: 'pavefacti hominis fugata mens metu, nec quid dicerent nec de quo diceret inveniebat'.

²⁰⁷ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 5, lines 25–32, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 348: 'Dominus Deus ad liberandum eum hominem angelum suum misit, de quo dictum est: "Immittet angelus Domini in

This is the first apparition: an angel in the appearance of an executioner. The next one is that of Stephen himself, although Florentius is only later sure of this (I shall here italicize Florentius's reactions to what he sees):

Having seen and heard this, Florentius, *restored to his mind and senses*, and *comforted after his soul's long flight*, did not cease to pray to and call upon the glorious Stephen inside himself. Finally, lifting his face a bit towards the judge who was questioning him, he saw the assessor of the judge. And he saw him glowing with a new face, a new countenance, bright and shining, not the one he knew very well but another, unknown and wonderful counselor of the judge. Whereas the one he had noticed previously had been withered of face by the deformity of senile old age, the one who [now] appeared to him shone with the beauty of a youthful face and brightness. Seeing this, the aforementioned Florentius, *much and deeply moved, no longer doubtful but firm and certain*, believed the glorious Stephen to be present there — and himself to be seeing him with a seeing faith (*oculata fide*) — sitting as judge in his case, or rather as his assessor. For the manner in which he *received confidence even more fully and perfectly from so great a vision* and affirmation of presence of the Friend of God was that he saw that same defender of his, his most merciful counsel-at-law, even gesturing to him with his hand, and so that he would fear no longer, making this clear with his right hand and joyful face, smiling at him — thereby promising him the fullest safety. What more is there to say? Gradually, those furious attacks by the judge and his anger began to be converted into total peace and mildness: so that he did not fear the judge but recognized him as his father.²⁰⁸

circuitu timentium eum, et eruet eos." Nam cum ille dispensator vitae suae incertus ac dubius sub tante metu terribilis potestatis inter questionarios adstaret, repente pulsatum se a tergo persensit. Statimque paululum cervice deflexa, oculisque fu rtim retrorsum reductis, videt velut unum de carnificibus circa se adstantem, sibique suggerent em quid ageret, quem rogare deberet, dicentem et admonentem : "Invoca sanctum Stephanum!"

²⁰⁸ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 5, lines 32–50, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 348–50: 'Quo viso auditoque, Florentius, suae menti ac sensui redditus et fu ga dudum retracto animo recreatus, gloriosum Stephanum intra semetipsum orare atque invocare minime desistebat. Deinde elevata parumper facie ad interrogantem iudicem, oculos intendit in iudicis assessorem. Quem cum nova facie novoque vultu micantem fulgentemque conspicer et, neque illum sibimet notissimum sed alium incognitum atque mirificum iudicis consiliarium cerneret, ita ut cum esset assessoris antea nota in omnibus et marcida aevo in vultu deformitas et seni lis aetas, in illo vero qui ei apparebat, iuvenili decore vultus et candore fulgebat; hoc viso memoratus Florentius, diu multumque permotus, non iam dubius sed firmus et certus, gloriosum Stephanum ibi praesentem credebat adesse, ipsumque oculata fide intendere se, et in sua causa iudicem sedere vel iudici adstare. Nam quo plenius perfectiusque de tali visione ac praesentatione amici Dei fiduciam caperet, videt Florentius eundem suum suffragatorem suique iudicis misericord issimum consiliatorem et iam manu sua sibimet annuentem, et ne quidquam prorsus timeret per manum dexteram significantem, vultuque hilari sibi aridentem ac spem salutis plenissimam pollicentem. Quid multa? Sensim coepere illi furiales impetus iudicis tumentesque animi ad omnem tran quillitatem lenitatemque deduci, ita ut non formidaret iudicem sed agnosceret patrem.'

Florentius was acquitted. In this last story, the author explicitly points to the overwhelming effect that the seeing of the heavenly image of forgiveness as ‘a new face, a new countenance, bright and shining’ had upon Florentius. Is this an appearance of Stephen’s ‘angelic’ face? Florentius is said to have been transformed from anxiety to trust: to be restored in his mind and senses; to be refreshed and re-created after his soul’s long flight (a phrase that reminds of the shamanic notion of illness as a ‘loss of soul’);²⁰⁹ to be much and deeply moved, and no longer doubtful but firm and certain; and to have received confidence from so great a vision. Here the phrase ‘oculata fides’ receives an additional meaning: that of seeing a spiritual reality that is usually hidden. On the earthly plane, however, there is something like a formal precedent for this motif: the African martyr Marianus had seen in a dream before his martyrdom the recently martyred Cyprian sitting as an assessor in the heavenly court and, smiling, inviting him to come up and sit with him instead of being judged.²¹⁰

The notion of being illumined and spiritually uplifted by gazing upon a heavenly or divine face has a pagan past.²¹¹ In the pagan mysteries, the neophyte’s actual spiritual regeneration was thought to be effected by his visual assimilation to the god’s sudden epiphany represented by an illumined statue in a darkened space.²¹² Since there were no images in the Israelites’ temple, the Old Testament notion of God’s ‘face’ is a metaphorical one: that of the Deity’s presence.²¹³ When the psalmists repeatedly pray for God’s face to shine upon them (Psalm 30. 17 (31. 16), 66. 2 (67. 1), 118 (119). 135), they are asking for salvation and peace; any actual seeing of God’s face is all but precluded in the earthly life.²¹⁴ When, in the Acts of Thomas, the apostle tells Christ that he stayed up at night ‘that I may behold your face and adore your holy brightness’,²¹⁵ this presumably means an experience of presence through prayer — perhaps including visualization — rather than an actual seeing.

²⁰⁹ Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*, pp. 18, 48.

²¹⁰ *Passio Mariani et Jacobi*, 6. 6 and 10, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. and trans. by Musurillo, p. 202, lines 2–3, 8–11.

²¹¹ Tiedtke, ‘Face’, p. 586. For the larger context, see Pax, ‘Epiphany’.

²¹² Grabar, *Martyrium*, II, 133.

²¹³ Tiedtke, ‘Face’, p. 586.

²¹⁴ Tiedtke, ‘Face’, p. 585.

²¹⁵ *Acta Thomae* 147, in *Acta ap. apocr.*, ed. by Tischendorf, Lipsius, and Bonnet, II. 2, 255–57; *Apocr.*, trans. by Elliott, p. 509.

Evodius's teacher and friend Augustine had preached and written against imagining God in human form.²¹⁶ Thus he had conceived of God's 'face' as an interior and abstract spiritual experience and of Christ as the indwelling, cosmic Christ rather than the human being. In the Uzalís dream visions, however, a human person who has reached his full spiritual potential emerges. And as our author describes it, this face, when Florentius experiences it as looking upon (shining upon) him lovingly, reaches into his inner centre and empowers him through restoring his self-confidence. At the same time, however, the implicit threat of possible capital punishment also makes this story a figure of resurrection or rebirth after an anticipated death — a model, of course, of salvation by Christ.

To put the event in perspective, the author then interjects with a Scriptural quotation — 'the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord' (Proverbs 21. 1) — that God in fact did it all. As we saw, the saint's implicit overlapping with Christ recurs throughout the stories.²¹⁷ With this reference to God as the active agent, is the author here pointing to the luminous, smiling face as in fact that of Christ — being 'the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1. 15) — shining through? As we saw, the apostle Paul had written: 'God [...] has shone in our hearts to give the illumination of knowing the brightness/glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus' (II Corinthians 4. 6); the brightness of the 'glory', then, functions as the 'image' or visual manifestation of the indwelling undepictable God.²¹⁸ Does our author's phrase 'a new countenance, bright and shining' perhaps point to this? In this story, we see that its perceiving precipitates the viewer's interior regeneration. The dreamers our author tells us about appear to have gradually discovered, on their own, their central transforming image: a smiling human face, as Paulinus too had imagined it, 'shining forth with a starry honour',²¹⁹ which they understood to be that of their fellow human being, the saint. It resembles that of Christ as imagined by Drewermann.²²⁰

To return to Florentius: the proconsul took him away from the executioners to his own office, began to admonish him 'in a familiar manner, with fatherly

²¹⁶ Augustine, *Epist.*, 147, xv. 37, CSEL, 44, p. 311, line 9; Augustine, *Epist.*, 148, iv. 13, CSEL, 44, p. 343, lines 6–17.

²¹⁷ Noted especially by Meyers, 'Citations bibliques dans le *De miraculis*', pp. 146, 152; and Devallet, 'Thèmes et structures du récit', p. 166.

²¹⁸ As Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, pp. 78, 92–95.

²¹⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, xv. 176, CSEL, 30, p. 59.

²²⁰ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 290.

affection', and finally granted him forgiveness. Everyone who had seen this happen was stupefied as well as overjoyed. The following night Florentius, at home again, had a dream:

Truly, that night he saw appearing to him in a dream the one whom he had seen in the court, youthful in appearance and clothed in light. When he was called upon by name, he heard him say:

'Come on, Florentius! Don't you recognize me? I am the one who appeared to you in court and liberated you from death!'

When Florentius recognized him, and understood him to be Stephen, he wished to adore him, but was raised by the saint's placing his hand under his chin.²²¹

After having gone to Uzalis and given thanks at Stephen's shrine, he was invited to tell his story in the monastery, in the presence of the Bishop — which precipitated another round of fervent thanksgiving by all.

'The Image of the Events and their Exemplars': God 'Speaks' through a Picture

The next-to-last story will now be treated last because it contains some crucial clues to the author's and the community's mindset. For it concerns, this time, a collective vision during a storm of a huge fiery dragon leaning down out of a cloud and about to throw itself upon the city — presumably what we would experience as a violent thunderstorm. The author does not say so, but there may well have been an apocalyptic dimension to this experience too. Because everyone rushed to the martyr's shrine to pray for his aid, the Church attributed the dragon's gradual disappearance to his intercession. The next day, a picture appeared out of nowhere that purported to show what had actually happened: an unknown merchant — perhaps an angel, our author says — offered a painting on a cloth for sale:

on the right of the cloth the holy Stephen is seen to stand, carrying on his shoulders the glorious Cross, whose point is seen to hit the gate of the city, through which one sees the most hideous dragon fleeing, while the Friend of God approaches. In truth, that noxious serpent was not at all safe in his flight, for he is seen [at the left?] to be trodden upon and crushed by the foot of the martyr of Christ.

²²¹ *Mirac. Steph.*, II, 5, lines 79–85, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 352: 'Verum nocte eadem per somnium videt apparentem sibi illum qui in secretario a se visus fuerat, iuvenili specie, vestitum lumine, a quo ultro nominatim compellatus audiuit: "Quid est, Florenti? Agnoscis me? Ego sum qui in Secretario apparui tibi teque de morte liberavi." Quem cum Florentius agnovisset, ipsumque esse sanctum Stephanum intellexisset, ubi eum adorare voluit, manu mento supposita ab illo est sublevatus.'

Such a picture, full of the mystery of God, when it was brought by the already-mentioned subdeacon to the shrine of such a patron and hung up in front of it, people of all ages and sexes began to look at it and admire it, like a great show in which the dragon is killed by the Creator or Liberator, and the Adversary is overcome. The evidence of the following day thus confirmed in everyone's soul what had been believed about the event the day before. For what was carefully seen on the cloth made this seem more believable as truth. The [seeing of the] picture accorded with the grace [that had been experienced], and it was with just as much divine inspiration that the saving deed of the previous day was remembered and later recognized in the image on the cloth. Finally, from this congruence between the [events of the] preceding day and the subsequent truth (*congruentia diei praecedentis atque sequentis veritatis*) [as depicted on the cloth], and between the image of the events [that were seen] and their [spiritual] exemplars (*imagine rerum et quorundam exemplariorum*), so great an astonishment and love, admiration and rejoicing was set aflame that no one said or affirmed anything else at all than "Truly, God liberated this city through his Friend, and drove away a great scourge from us".²²²

Here it is the picture that shows what really happened: the real reality is the supra-sensory one. The 'Creator' and Liberator' is likely to point to Christ, as is said, acting through his saint. The visible events of the preceding day, then, are simply 'the image' or the sensory appearance, and the painting shows the 'truth', their invisible models or exemplars. Not only that: the picture's — ostensibly divinely produced — existence itself is understood to be the *proof* that what it shows is what really happened. Remarkably, the author presents the seeing and understanding of the picture — in essence, a divine revelation — as just as much an inspired

²²² *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 4, lines 54–72, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 344: 'in dextera veli parte ipse beatus Stephanus videbatur adstare, et gloriosam crucem propriis repositam humeris baiulare, qua crucis cuspidem portam civitatis videbatur pulsare, ex qua profugiens draco taeterrimus cernebatur exire, amico Dei videlicet adventante. Verum ille serpens noxius nec in ipsa sua fuga tutissimus, sub triumphali pede martyris Christi contritus aspicietur et pressus. Talis itaque pictura veli non omnino absque mysterio Dei ubi a memorato subdiacono allata pariter atque suspensa est ante ipsam memoriam tanti patroni, omnis aetas omni sive sexus profecto intueri et mirari coepit spectaculum grande, quo scilicet auctore quoque liberatore draco ille extinctus et hostisque devinctus. Gestae quippe rei fidem praecedentis diei commendabat in animis omnium attestatio sequentis diei. Namque illud quod studiosius cernebatur in velo, hoc iam credibilius tenebatur in vero. Concurrebat enim pictura cum gratia, et tam divini tunc illud pridie salutis beneficium recolebatur quam postea in veli imagine advertebatur. Denique ex ipsa congruentia diei praecedentis atque sequentis veritatis, et imagine rerum et quorundam exemplariorum, tantus in multis stupor pariterque amor, admiratio et gratulatio accendebatur ut a cunctis nihil aliud omnino vel diceretur vel affirmaretur nisi hoc unum: "Vere quia per amicum suum Deus istam liberavit civitatem, et eandem a nobis depulit pestem."

experience as the grateful remembering of the actual event. Then, to drive his point home, he makes the picture speak:

And the truth of God was like a certain speech to men in the [picture on the] cloth silently signifying and [thereby] saying very clearly:

‘O wretched mortals, how you yesterday escaped the fire of the dragon, and whose intercession for you was accepted, understand from that figuration of the cloth of the following day and rejoice. Reconsider your preceding attack as well as subsequent liberation among yourselves, and from then on no longer doubting but certain [about what happened], give thanks to your God through my Friend. Behold, you see the dragon put to flight and expelled from your city, behold my first martyr crushing his head underfoot, and behold the trophy of the Cross by which you will conquer your Enemy.’

In this way our city was first liberated from so great a danger and later, instructed and enlightened by the admonition of a congruent picture on cloth, every pious soul was exhilarated in the glory of God by the double miracle.²²³

We seem to see a materialized and then verbalized dream vision here. Gazing at the picture receptively in the sacred space of the church would be entering the ‘dream’, as it were, and making it part of the ‘script’ of one’s lifeworld.²²⁴ The picture, experienced as ‘proving’ the martyr’s prowess and through the picture’s ‘silent speaking’ making it permanently visible, is the final stage, as it were, in what looks like Stephen’s acceptance and institutionalization as the patron of the city. At the same time, however, his doing this with the Cross again makes him a figure of Christ.

What our author says about the picture as related to the events to which it points reveals some fundamentals of his view of what is. First, the surprising double description, in which Christ and Stephen are made to overlap, reminding of Paulinus letting Felix and Christ do something similar.²²⁵ Further down, phrases such as ‘the congruence between the [events of the] preceding day and the

²²³ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 4, lines 72–83, *Miracles*, ed. by Meyers and others, pp. 344–46: ‘Et re vera Dei fuit ad homines quaedam illa allocutio in velo tacite significantis admodum et dicentis: “O miseri mortales, quale hesternum die evaseritis draconis incendium, vel cuius pro vo bis advocati suffragium fuerit acceptum, isto sequenti die iustius veli figura tione intelligite, atque gaudete. Hinc vestram et praecedentem tentationem et subsequentem liberationem apud vosmetipsos conferte, exinde non dubii, sed certi, Deo vestro per amicum meum gratias agite. Ecce draconem de vestra civitate cernitis fugatum et expulsum, ecce conterentem caput eius primum martyrem meum, ecce Crucis tropaeum per quod vestrum vicistis inimicum.” Hoc ergo modo civitate nostra a tanto primitus periculo liberata, ac postea tali per congruentem picturam veli admonitione instructa et illuminata, gemino miraculo est omnis pia anima in Dei gloria exhilarata.’

²²⁴ Cf. Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness*, I, 13.

²²⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 49. 14, CSEL, 29, p. 403, lines 1–2.

subsequent truth [in the picture]', and between 'the image of the events and their exemplars' refer to two different planes of reality: transient visible appearances as opposed to the true divine reality 'behind' them. May we infer from the author's description of the picture that not only in Stephen's acts, but also in his visible appearance as seen by the dreamers and by Florentius, Christ is somehow thought and sensed to shine through?

'A New Face'

Who was so hard and ironclad as not to burst into tears? not to melt into piety and humility? [...] Who can ever adequately praise this? There was a clamour of thanksgiving upon the hearing of the reading, and again a greater exultation was stirred up by the seeing of the visible aspect and thus, through hearing and seeing, the flame of divine love then penetrated the heart of every man.²²⁶

The author's image of the 'flame of divine love' appears to point to Bishop Severus's hope for the world now having been realized, at least in Uzalis. The reaction of the audience to the stories about Stephen's miracles and the seeing of those healed and rescued, as it is here described in the second book's prologue, shows us how what had occasioned doubts as ostensible bits of bone and dust had gradually come to be understood as mediating the presence of the city's heavenly patron. Envisioned by some as a beautiful young man with a smiling face, his look, word, and touch — understood, at least by the Church authorities, to transmit Christ's compassion and power — could heal and save. Seeing, as well as (presumably) imagining during prayer, the luminous image with its smiling face appears to have precipitated a transformation from anxiety and loss of soul to a trust and centredness in oneself, the community, and the universe that could also lead to physical healing.

The martyr Stephen's 'new face' which we see emerging gradually in the Uzalis (dream) visions, and which became concretized in the cloth picture, appears to be one that was imaginatively constructed as well as 'discovered' by the subjects themselves through an affective-spiritual need and process. At the analytical level, this process resembles that in which a poet simultaneously discovers and invents an

²²⁶ *Mirac. Steph.*, II. 1, lines 33–34, 36–39, ed. by Meyers and others, p. 308: 'Quis tunc durus ac ferreus non in lacrimas erupit, non ad pietatem humilitatemque defluxit? [...] Quis unquam digno praeconio loqui possit? Fiebat clamor gratulationis in auditu lectionis; rursum maior quoque exultatio excitabatur in aspectu visionis; ac sic per auditum et visum penetrabat flamma divini amoris omnis tunc cor hominis.'

image, a metaphor, that concretizes and makes visible and inspectable what he vaguely senses. In Drewermann's complementary view, the visionary images might have been visualized energy patterns created in human mind-bodies by the invisible divine reality — which cannot be approached directly — for the purpose of communication and interaction with mankind. I would suggest that these views, combined with Devisch's description of ritual symbols as dynamic patterns woven into the body that, when activated in a state of dream-consciousness, transform mind and body, shed significant light on the miracles, especially the dreamed ones, which we have examined. Experiencing this image of the saint transmitted or precipitated mental and physical healing.

The author's statements suggest, however, that he may have regarded the luminous youth with the 'new face' who is presented as the martyr to manifest something more as well. In the Old Testament, the glory of God tends to be described as fiery light.²²⁷ In the last days, there was to be a full manifestation of this glory (Isaiah 60; Ezekiel 39. 21–29). The mention in Severus's letter of 'the fire of divine love' in connection with the final conversion of Israel appears to point to a Christian understanding of this passage.²²⁸ This glory would also be manifested by God's mighty deeds or miracles (Galatians 5. 26). There would be a transfiguration of the created world and of mankind.²²⁹

The author of the Uzalís stories seems to suggest that through seeing this 'glory' in the miracles it would somehow enter into people's hearts as a fiery light of love and the Holy Spirit — as had been seen by the lady in the first vision. But it could also transform. As we saw, the apostle Paul, speaking of 'seeing' Christ, here as announced in the Old Testament text, had written: 'seeing-and-reflecting with unveiled faces the glory of the Lord, we all are transformed into that same image, from light to light, as though by the Spirit of the Lord' (II Corinthians 3. 18). Plotinus, too, had said we become what we see.²³⁰ Throughout our source, Stephen's miracles in and around Uzalís are presented as the visible and palpable appearance, not only of the doctrinal content of the Christian faith, but at the same time of Christ's implicitly luminous, compassionate heavenly 'glory'. The author appears to be suggesting that, for the faithful, the seeing of this embodied glory would open

²²⁷ Aalen, 'Glory, Honour. Doxa. Time', p. 45.

²²⁸ As in Matthew 16. 27, 24. 30.

²²⁹ Matthew 24. 39; Philippians 3. 20; Colossians 3. 4. See Aalen, 'Glory, Honour. Doxa. Time', pp. 47–48.

²³⁰ Grabar, 'Plotin et les origines de l'esthétique médiévale', p. 23.

their inner eyes to the all-powerful compassion of the invisible God and set their hearts alight with the flame of divine love.

For some, evidently this led to a personal envisioning of Stephen's face — a face whose luminous radiance and loving smile, perhaps secretly manifesting the face of Christ himself, could transform hearts and bodies. This transformation, I suggest, may have resembled what Eugen Drewermann describes as having happened in Jesus's healings:

Just as, at the beginning of spring, the warmth of the sun entices the flowers to come forth out of the earth, inasmuch as it does not create the sleeping form in these but awakes it to develop itself, in this way should we understand the revelation of God in the man Jesus of Nazareth: such a goodness and warmth emanated from his person that all the images of healing/salvation that are placed in the human soul, and brought to the fore by his presence, connected themselves with his appearance and formed a composite picture, in whose reflection each human being can recognize Christ's truth, in that he also comes to know himself.²³¹

Not only, then, had the people of Uzalís come to see the faith they had heard about made visible in the miracles that were now happening. They had also dreamingly discovered and created an empowering and healing image of the martyr through which they felt Christ shining into their hearts.

²³¹ Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, II, 768–69: 'So wie am Beginn des Frühlings die Wärme der Sonne die Blumen aus der Erde hervorlockt, indem sie die in ihnen schlummernde Gestalt nicht erschafft, wohl aber zur Entfaltung weckt, so wird man auch die Offenbarung Gottes in dem Menschen Jesus von Nazareth nicht anders verstehen können, als das von der Person Jesu eine solche Güte und Wärme ausging, dass all die Bilder des Heils, die in der menschlichen Seele angelegt sind, durch seine Nähe auf den Plan gerufen wurden, sich mit seiner Gestalt verbanden und sich zu einem Gesamtgemälde formten, in dem Widerschein ein jeder Mensch die Wahrheit Christi zu erkennen vermag, indem er sich selber darin offenbart wird.'



Figure 6. 'Christ healing a paralytic', ivory panel, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fifth century. Copyright Genevra Kornbluth.

‘INSTEAD OF A DOCUMENT, A FACE’: AUGUSTINE ON THE MARTYRS’ NEW MIRACLES

In his sermons about the martyrs, Augustine tried to make the stories about their passions that were regularly read in church come alive through translating certain details into the spiritual sphere of the individual, who could thereby try to achieve through interior processes the otherworldliness — or possession by Christ — which the martyrs had achieved through the endurance of physical tortures.¹ It is in these sermons too that Augustine later refers to the new contemporary miracles happening around their relics. Considering the evidence of his views in Chapter 4, I am inclined to think that the sermons that refer to contemporary miracles — although scholars have dated some of them earlier according to other criteria — were delivered in any case after the year 421/22 (the date of *Concerning the Care for the Dead*) and more probably after the year 424, which appears to be the date Augustine means when he indicates in his *On the City of God* that he ‘recently’ visited his friend Evodius in Uzalis. As already indicated, although he — tantalizingly — does not say so, it seems probable that he was then given the particles of the relics of the martyr Stephen which, he says, arrived in his city of Hippo that same year.²

His sermons about the martyrs can be roughly divided into three categories: those which speak of spiritual imitation only; those which also mention that the martyrs if prayed to will hear, care about, and intercede for the living in an unspecified

¹ On Augustine’s sermons about the qualities of the martyrs, see Février, ‘Martyre et sainteté’, pp. 52–54, 59–61. On endurance and similar processes, see Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, especially pp. 72–85.

² Respectively Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 36–65, and XXII. 8, lines 353–54, CCSL, 48, p. 824. Cf. Lancel, ‘Saint Augustin et le miracle’, p. 70, citing in n. 56 Perler, *Les Voyages de saint Augustin*, pp. 373–80, and 75. Similarly Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, p. 259.

manner; and those which, alongside the martyrs' value as models for the spiritual life, specifically mention an expectation of their present 'benefits' — presumably including miracles — to the living. Considering Augustine's still very reserved views in his treatise on the care for the dead in 422, the last category will be assumed to be chronologically posterior to this. As will be seen, however, even in the heady moment after a miraculous cure has just taken place in a crowded and jubilant church, Augustine still insisted that everyone should 'read' the event that had just taken place before their eyes.

Spiritual imitation of the martyrs' prowess is at the centre of all Augustine's sermons about them, however; in those held about the martyr Stephen when miracles were profusely occurring it is even more conspicuous than before. The following are his main arguments. In contrast to the pagans who deify their famous men, the martyr is only to be venerated and God is the one who is to be worshipped; in contrast to the pagans too, the martyrs' exploits are not poets' fables but history.³ The most frequent image Augustine uses in this context is that of the martyr's passion as a visible form of spiritual theatre which he wants his audience to visualize mentally, empathize with, and re-enact as an interior imitation.⁴ It is again a 'reading', this time a performative one, of a visible event. Thus he says: 'We see a great show with the eyes of faith, the holy martyr Vincent overcoming everything.'⁵ Translated into the individual's personal experience, this could be, for instance, suffering illness and heroically rejecting the overtures of pagan healers using ligatures and incantations,⁶ for it is Jesus who is the real physician, as when he cured the soul of the apostle Paul.⁷ There is, in these sermons, no hint that there might be cures at a martyr's shrine; the latter's former endurance under torture for the sake of Christ is itself a miracle, showing that Christ and the Holy Spirit lived in him.⁸ However, those who intentionally inflict tortures or death upon themselves so that they, and not God, will be worshipped are not true martyrs;⁹ clearly, the suicidal Donatist martyrs are meant

³ Augustine, *Sermo* 273, PL, 38, cols 1247[D]–1252[C].

⁴ See Miller, 'Relics, Rhetoric and Mental Spectacles'.

⁵ Augustine, *Sermo* 274, PL, 38, col. 1252[D]: 'Magnum spectaculum spectavimus oculis fidei, martyrem sanctum Vincentium ubique vincentem.'

⁶ Augustine, *Sermo* 286. 7, PL, 38, cols 1300[D]–1301[A].

⁷ Augustine, *Sermo* 299. 6, PL, 38, col. 1372[A]: 'Medicus magnus, hoc est Jesus' (a great physician he is, this Jesus).

⁸ Augustine, *Sermo* 276. 1, PL, 38, cols 1255[D]–1256[A].

⁹ Augustine, *Sermo* 283. v. 4, PL, 38, col. 1287[D]–1288[A]; newly edited by Demeulenaere, 'Le Sermon 283 de saint Augustin', p. 113.

here. For it is not the suffering itself that is glorious, but the reason for the suffering, which is the witness to Christ; other sermons too warn against these false martyrs.¹⁰

Alongside these sermons, there are those which also clearly indicate that, alongside Christ, the saints and martyrs in heaven too can be asked to pray for the living to liberate them from evil,¹¹ and to be aided by Christ's grace.¹² In an undated sermon about Perpetua and Felicitas,¹³ Augustine urges his audience to imitate and rejoice in their virtues but not to expect to be able to equal them: 'We admire them — they have compassion for us. We congratulate ourselves with them — they pray for us.'¹⁴ Sermon 284 about Marianus and Jacobus¹⁵ has been dated to 8 May 418 because of its internal correspondences to then present doctrinal concerns.¹⁶ Here Augustine says that the Church does not pray for them, as for others, because they don't need this, 'but rather commends itself to their prayers'.¹⁷ As we saw in the treatise for Paulinus, Augustine at that time recognized the occurrence of miracles around martyrs' shrines outside Africa. In these two sermons he encourages prayer to them to intercede with Christ for what appear to be spiritual benefits only. The different degrees of specificity about possible miracles in these and the following sermons need not necessarily point to a timeline, however. For even after the miracles began happening in his vicinity, Augustine could simply not have wanted to mention them every time: as will be seen he continued to stress the saint's spiritual example as inestimably more important than any temporal event.

'Divine Gifts': Earlier Miracles, or Later Sermons?

As already indicated, there are sermons in which views on contemporary miracles appear that — according to the evidence considered above — should postdate his

¹⁰ Augustine, *Sermones* 327–30, 335, PL, 38, cols 1450[D]–1459[A], 1470[A]–1471[C].

¹¹ As in Augustine, *Sermo* Guelferbitanus XXVII. 8, ed. by Morin, p. 543, lines 10–12.

¹² Augustine, *Sermo* Frangipani VIII. 5, ed. by Morin, p. 231, lines 5–6.

¹³ Cf. Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 76–79, 316.

¹⁴ Augustine, *Sermo* 280. vi. 6, PL, 38, col. 1283[D]: 'Miramur eos, miserantur nos. Gratulamur eis, precantur pro nobis.'

¹⁵ Cf. Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 203, 316.

¹⁶ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 506, 514; Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, pp. 213–27, 641.

¹⁷ Augustine, *Sermo* 284. 5, PL, 38, col. 1291[C]: 'pro martyribus non orat, sed eorum potius orationibus se commendat'.

new appraisal of their occurring in his part of the world in the early 420s but which are dated earlier by scholars on account of resemblances to Augustine's doctrinal concerns and use of certain biblical quotations in a specific time period. It seems to me, however, that unless Augustine aired views on miracles in some of his sermons that substantially differed from those in his contemporary written treatises, he would not express positive views there on, for him, so passionate a topic before he had really changed his mind about it.

Sermon 285 about the martyrs Castus and Aemilius¹⁸ — dated variously as held in 412 and 416¹⁹ — keeps insisting upon the primacy of God's action. We pray for the dead, he says, but not for the martyrs, for they are our advocates (*advocati*), while Christ is our only true advocate; and only those martyrs are to be honoured who had grace and piety — not, as those of the Donatists, audacity and temerity.²⁰ The sermons that now follow, although they have been dated before the 420s, contain hints or explicit statements of views that characterize Augustine's later period.

Sermon 302, held on the feast of the martyr Lawrence,²¹ presents another mystery. Its latter part refers to what seems to be the murder by Christians of an offensive pagan imperial official, after they had dragged him out of a church in which he had sought asylum. Because of the dates of certain imperial laws as well as because of the fact that a pagan could hold such high office, and because of a veiled reference to an unspeakable catastrophe — the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410? — this part of the sermon has been convincingly dated to 412.²² Augustine urges his audience to leave the punishment of criminals to the state, to respect the right of asylum, and to live peaceably. The first part of the sermon, however, connecting to what must have been the foregoing reading of the martyr's passion, consists of an unusually passionate plea to the audience to prefer the eternal to the temporary life, as the martyr had done, and to imitate his virtues.²³ As the sermon stands, these words could refer indirectly to the lynching.

¹⁸ Cf. Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 208, 316.

¹⁹ Respectively Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, pp. 281–88, 641, and Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 482, 514.

²⁰ Augustine, *Sermo* 285. 5 and 7, PL, 38, cols 1235[D] and 1297[A].

²¹ Now in the new edition: *Aurelii Augustini Sermo CCCII*, ed., trans., and comm. by Pieri. On Laurentius, see Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 127–29 and often.

²² Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne*, pp. 495–506, 641. This date is confirmed by Pieri in Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, pp. 32–35.

²³ Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, 302. 2, ed. by Pieri, p. 50 (this edition does not number the lines).

If it is to be dated to 412, however, its very first words surprise. For Augustine, after first saying that unless the martyrs' acts are imitated, their feasts are celebrated in an empty way (*inaniter*), proceeds to point to what appear to be Lawrence's *present* miracles, saying:

Who is unaware of this martyr's merit? Who has prayed there (*ibi*) [presumably: near his body or relics] without receiving what he asked for? How many temporal benefits has his merit given to many sick persons — temporal benefits which he himself contemned!²⁴

This appears to point to plentiful contemporary miracles perhaps involving persons in his community, something which we do not see in any of his writings until after 422. And *where* are the miracles happening? Since he mentions in another sermon about the same martyr, dated as between 425 and 430,²⁵ that Lawrence's martyrdom had been at Rome,²⁶ it has been assumed that 'there' means 'Rome'.²⁷ If the miracles are so far away, however, why the following passionate words about them? Surprisingly, they are severely deprecating:

These [miracles] were granted not so that the weakness of the ones who prayed would remain, but so that once inferior things had been conceded, a love would be born [in them] to seek better things. For frequently a father gives his young children small things to play with, especially because they will cry if they don't get them. It is a benign paternal indulgence that grants and gives these things, and that does not want [this attitude] to remain in his sons as they grow up and become wiser. Therefore he gives the boys nuts [i.e. worthless things], through which he makes sure that he will have heirs. Paternal devotion, then, cedes this to them as they play and please themselves with these toys, lest they, in their youthful weakness, should rebel [against him]. This is kindness, not edification. What the martyrs [truly] teach, what they were able to attain, what they attained through their greatness of heart, and for what they shed their blood, you have heard [read] in the Gospel: 'Your reward is abundant in heaven'.²⁸

²⁴ Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, 302. 1, ed. by Pieri, p. 46: 'Cuius autem meriti sit memoratus martyr, quis ignorat? Quis ibi oravit et non impetravit? Quam multis infirmis meritum eius etiam temporalia beneficia praestitit, quae ille contempsit!'

²⁵ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 507, 514.

²⁶ Augustine, *Sermo* 303. 1, PL 38, col. 1393[D]: 'Beati Laurentii illustre martyrium est, sed Romae, non hic' (the blessed Lawrence's martyrdom was splendid, but at Rome, not here).

²⁷ Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, ed. by Pieri, pp. 95–96.

²⁸ Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, 302. 1, ed. by Pieri, pp. 46–48: 'Concessa sunt enim, non ut precantium permaneret infirmitas, sed ut de terrenis concessis, amor fieret ad appetenda meliora. Quaedam enim plerumque parva et ludicra concedit pater parvulis filiis, quae maxime, nisi acceperint, plorant. Benigna et paterna indulgentia haec impertit, haec donat, quae non vult permanere in filiis suis iam grandiusculis, iam proficientibus. Donat ergo pueris nudes, quibus servat hereditatem. Ludentibus et de quibusdam ludicris se oblectantibus cedit paterna pietas, ne deficiat aetatis

To compare miraculous cures with toys and worthless things given to whining children who will cry or even go away if they don't get them reveals serious irritation;²⁹ in fact, the tone here differs from anything else I have seen on this subject in Augustine's writings. It appears to denigrate even the granting itself of the divine miracles as well as their content.³⁰ From what he says here, it looks as though miracles are frequently happening at a nearby shrine of the martyr accessible to the people whom he is addressing, who are forgetting about everything else. Significantly, Augustine does not call the miracles themselves into question but only tries to shift the people's attention. After dwelling upon the misery of the present life and the joy of the future one, he urges: 'I ask, I beseech, I exhort, not only you, but together with you also ourselves: let us love the eternal life!'; to make clear what he means, he adds: 'Therefore I was not referring to the martyrs when I said: "Let us love the eternal [life] in the same manner as the temporal one is loved."³¹ After a long exposition about this he sums up this part of the sermon:

If we wish these celebrations for the martyrs to benefit us let us keep this [the misery and fleetingness of the present life] in mind and imitate the martyrs diligently [in their rejection of it]. Always have I admonished you, brothers, and never ceased, never have I been silent [about this]: that the eternal life is to be loved, the present one to be contemned, but lived in a good [i.e. faithful] manner, and that the good is to be hoped for.³²

All this appears to presume an accepted — if not fully appreciated — knowledge of numerous true miracles as actually happening through this martyr to people in his audience, a view that does not seem to accord with Augustine's attitude of reserved silence about miracles in his own part of the world in the treatise *Concerning the Care for the Dead* of 421/22. Edmund Hill, who has translated many of Augustine's

infirmis. Blandientis est hoc, non aedificantis. Quod aedificaverunt martyres, quod capere potuerunt, quod grandi corde ceperunt, propter quod sanguinem fuderunt, audistis in evangelio: "Merces vestra copiosa est in caelis." Cf. Matthew 5. 12.

²⁹ Pieri (Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, pp. 101–03) identifies classical allusions here.

³⁰ The image of difficult-to-understand passages in Scripture as nuts bought by boys, and of Christ as an indulgent father who will break them open for his children, is found in a positive sense in *Sermo* 341. 22 (Dolbeau 22, Mainz 55), in Dolbeau, 'Nouveaux sermons de saint Augustin pour la conversion des païens et des donatistes (VII)', p. 192.

³¹ Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, 302. 2, ed. by Pieri, p. 50: 'Rogo, obsecro, exhortor, non solum vos, sed vobiscum et nos, diligamus aeternam vitam'; 'Non ergo martyres adtendi, quando dixi: "Diligamus aeternam [vitam], quomodo diligitur temporalis".'

³² Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, 302. 9, ed. by Pieri, p. 60: 'Hoc ergo cogitantes, impigre martyres imitemur, si volumus nobis prodesse sollemnitates, quas celebramus. Semper haec admonuimus, fratres, numquam cessavimus, numquam tacuimus. Vita aeterna diligenda est, praesens contemnenda est. Bene vivendum est, bonum sperandum est.'

sermons, expressed 'considerable doubts' that this sermon as it now stands was conceived as a whole, suggesting that the latter part about the lynching may have been pasted on to the former part about the martyr by a later hand.³³ And in fact, the earliest surviving, eighth-century manuscript of the text contains the first part only, and the oldest manuscript with the text as it now stands was found in a ninth-century collection (based upon a sixth-century African one) that also contained sermons that were clearly inauthentic.³⁴ I would suggest, therefore, that the first part of this sermon (the tone of which seems inordinately testy) may have been written by another person or, if it is authentic, belongs either to the period of the early 420s, before Augustine's trip to Uzalis, or to the period after 424, at a moment when the popular enthusiasm about miracles seemed dangerously excessive.

Sermon 325 about martyrs in general — dated as 405/11³⁵ — also takes the martyrs' miracles for granted, and Augustine is very explicit about the attitude he expects of his audience. What everyone needs to be reminded of, he says,

is first of all that we should not think that the martyrs will confer anything upon us because we celebrate their most solemn feasts. Because they don't need our celebrations [...], they rejoice with us, however, not if we honour them but if we imitate them [...]. This is the utility of this feast, there is no other.³⁶

Seeing the confident generalization here about miracles, a date after the early 420s seems appropriate here too. The same may be said of Sermon 331 (undated), which again points to the contrast between true and false martyrs and adds: 'Don't ask anything of God, except himself. Love him freely and long for him alone.'³⁷ Evidently, not everyone knew how to do this. For many, perhaps, a miracle was the only way they knew of experiencing God.

Augustine's later views appear in Sermon 286 about the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius, which indeed has been dated to this period.³⁸ This no doubt also has to do with his mention of the pamphlets describing the miracles in and around

³³ Augustine, *Essential Sermons*, ed. by Doyle, trans. by Hill, p. 357.

³⁴ Augustine, *Sermo CCCII*, ed. by Pieri, pp. 36–42. The author does not adduce the statements about the miracles as a criterium for the datation.

³⁵ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 441–42, 515.

³⁶ Augustine, *Sermo* 325. 1, PL, 38, col. 1447[D]: 'Primum ne arbitremur aliquid nos conferre martyribus, quia eorum dies solemnissimos celebramus. Illi nostris festivitibus non egent [...], congaudent autem nobis, non si honoremus eos, sed si imitemur eos. [...] Haec est omnino huius festivitatis utilitas, alia non est.'

³⁷ Augustine, *Sermo* 331. v. 4, PL, 38, col. 1461[A].

³⁸ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 508, 514.

Hippo, which were instituted at that time.³⁹ He begins by giving a lengthy definition of martyrs and their inspirational function in the Church and attests to his having known about the miracles done by these particular martyrs after they had been found in Milan, having been a witness of their 'glory', and having seen the cured Severus in the church.⁴⁰ Then, in contrast to his earlier denials, he formulates his new view of contemporary miracles in general:

God does not cease showing himself, and he knows how to commend his own miracles. He knows how to act so that they are greatly praised; he knows how to act so that they do not become common. He does not give health to all through the martyrs, but does promise immortality to all those who imitate the martyrs. [...] those who are healed now will after a little while die; those who are resurrected in the End, will live with Christ.⁴¹

Miracles, then, do not now become so familiar as to be looked down upon because they are not granted to all:

I say this, my brothers, so that you will not be sad when you ask and do not receive, and think that God does not have you before his eyes if he does not grant your wish in this time. For the physician does not always listen to the wish of the sick man [...]. He does not give what [the ill man] asks: but what this man does not ask, that he gives.⁴²

Then Augustine again compares martyrdom with a story from one of the pamphlets read in the church, calling it a 'martyrium in lecto' (martyrdom in bed), something which is borne by many. In it the Devil's emissary — a wizard promising health through amulets and incantations — is overcome by the patient's refusing this and remaining in the faith;⁴³ to merit a pamphlet, however, this case must have been followed by a miraculous cure. What we seem to see here is that healing through prayer to the martyr for his intercession appears to be taking the place of clerical prayer and anointing in the private home.

³⁹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 350–53, CCSL, 48, p. 824.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *Sermo* 286. v. 4, PL, 38, col. 1299[A–B].

⁴¹ Augustine, *Sermo* 286. v. 5, PL, 38, col. 1299[C]: 'Non cessat Deus attestari: et novit quomodo ipsa miracula sua debeat commendare. Novit agere, ut magnificentur: novit agere, ne vilescent. Non omnibus donat per martyres sanitatem: sed omnibus promittit imitatoribus martyrum immortalitatem. [...] qui modo sanantur, post paululum aliquando moriuntur; qui in fine resurgunt, cum Christo vivent.'

⁴² Augustine, *Sermo* 286. vi, PL, 38, col. 1299[D]: 'Ideo ista dico, fratres mei, ne contristemini quando petitis, et non accipitis, et arbitremini quod ante oculos vos non habeat Deus, si ad tempus non exaudiat voluntatem vestram. Non enim semper aegrum exaudit medicus ad voluntatem [...]. Non dat quod petit; sed quod non petit, hoc procurat.'

⁴³ Augustine, *Sermo* 286. viii. 7, PL, 38, cols 1300[D]–1301[A].

'I Suddenly Fell to the Ground': Experiencing the New Miracles

Augustine's extant sermons about Stephen give the best picture of his change of mind about contemporary miracles. Instead of being written up years later, as in Uzalis, they capture a number of experienced moments in the reception and effect of this relic. As already indicated, it is more than probable that it was during his visit to Bishop Evodius in 424 that Augustine finally accepted the actual occurrence of the new miracles now also in Africa and was given a particle of Stephen's relics there to take with him to his own city. In 425, he allowed his deacon Eraclius, later to be his successor, to build a commemorative chapel (*memoria*) for them adjoining the city church. The large number of miracles — almost seventy — that he mentions in his *City of God* as having happened in the two years after the relic's arrival necessitated a revision of his position: instead of downplaying them as something that true believers should be able to do without because they were no longer necessary to establish the faith, he now presented them — perhaps also to impress the remaining pagans — as visible and palpable proofs of the truth of the faith for which the martyrs had died as well as of their actual resurrection as promised by Christ.

Two of his sermons about Stephen that make no mention of his relics or miracles may have been held before these arrived in the city, although they could equally well have been held after the relics' arrival as another attempt to temper and counterbalance what seems to have been a popular enthusiasm that was difficult to contain. Sermon 314 — dated 26 December (the martyr's feast day) of a year that must be before 425 since it does not mention Eraclius's chapel built in that year⁴⁴ — simply urges the audience to imitate the martyr's love of his enemies if they wish for an eternal reward.⁴⁵ The second sermon (315) — also not mentioning the chapel or his miracles, and dated around Easter (when the martyr's passion in Acts was read annually) in the year 416/17⁴⁶ — stresses the similarity of his martyrdom to Christ's passion and invited the audience to picture the stoning mentally:

You hear, and you see shows in your heart. The sound is in your ears, the vision in your minds. You see the great fight of saint Stephen, who is stoned in this fight [...]. The heavens are opened; he sees Jesus exhorting his athlete, as it were.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 508, 514.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *Sermo* 314, PL 38, cols 1425[A]–1426[C].

⁴⁶ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 472–73, 514.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *Sermo* 315. iii. 5, PL, 38, col. 1428[A–B]: 'Audistis, et spectacula cordis vidistis. Sonus erat in auribus, visio in mentibus. Spectastis magnum agonem sancti Stephani, qui in agone lapidabatur. [...] Apertum est coelum: vidit Iesum tanquam exhortantem athletam suam.'

Just before he died, Stephen prayed that his lapidators' deed not be reckoned as a sin. From this, Augustine makes him the model of forgiving one's enemies, saying that our own anger in fact kills us and advising how to overcome it:

Acknowledge with whom you are fighting in the theatre of your heart. The theatre is small, but God is watching: there conquer your enemy. [...] God is present at your struggles so that they may go well for you when you look at the fight of so great a martyr; so that in the same manner that you are seeing him overcoming [evil] and are appreciating the victor, you too are overcoming [evil] in your heart.⁴⁸

The process described here is exactly that of affective mimesis: seeing and internalizing an event precipitates an involuntary interior re-enactment of the action.⁴⁹ Augustine, the former rhetor, knew exactly what he was doing.

Sermon 318 is dated as early 425 — Eraclius's new chapel of 425 is not mentioned⁵⁰ — but is almost certainly earlier, for it appears to celebrate the first deposition of the relics in the church of Hippo almost two years before Augustine wrote about the new miracles in 426,⁵¹ saying: 'Your Holiness expects to know what has been set in this place today: they are the relics of the first and most blessed martyr Stephen.'⁵² Augustine then introduces their history to the audience, reminding them of Stephen's passion as described in Acts and telling them that his body had lain hidden until recently, when, just like the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius, they were discovered through a dream. With tantalizing vagueness, he continues:

Many thereafter received [Stephen's] relics, for God wished it, and they came here. Let the place and the day be commended to you, both to be celebrated in the honour of God, to whom Stephen bore witness. For in this place we do not make an altar for Stephen, but with Stephen's relics [we make] an altar for God.⁵³

⁴⁸ Augustine, *Sermo* 315. vii. 10, PL, 38, col. 1431[A], [C]: 'Agnosce inimicam tuam: agnosce cum qua pugnas in theatro pectoris tui. Angustum theatrum; sed Deus spectat: ibi doma inimicam tuam. [...] Deus adsit certaminibus vestris, ut prosit vobis quod tanti Martyris agonem spectastis; ut quomodo vincentem vidistis et vincenti favistis, sic et vos in corde vestro vincatis.'

⁴⁹ Cf. Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes*, pp. 10–13.

⁵⁰ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 508, 515.

⁵¹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 353–54, CCL, 48, p. 824. Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 259–61, mentions what is known about the relics and their translations, as well as about the chapel built for them.

⁵² Augustine, *Sermo* 318. 1, PL, 38, col. 1437[D]: 'Exspectat Sanctitas vestra scire quid hodie in isto loco positum sit. Reliquiae sunt primi et beatissimi martyris Stephani'.

⁵³ Augustine, *Sermo* 318. 1, PL 38, col. 1438[A–B]: 'Multi inde reliquias acceperunt, quia Deus voluit, et huc venerunt. Commendatur ergo Charitati vestrae et locus et dies: utrumque

A description of the meaning of martyrdom as an example for others follows. The sermon concludes with a promise of solace to the sick: let them resist the wizards, 'for you have [...] a by no means small solace: this place of prayer'.⁵⁴ Here, then, Augustine actually recommends praying for Stephen's intercession as more effective, and in any case safer, than consorting with pagan healers. Significantly, it is again the holy power inhering in the *place* which is highlighted.

Sermon 316 — dated as 26 December in a year not earlier than 425 because it mentions Eraclius's chapel⁵⁵ — refers to miracles as having happened near Stephen's relics in the city itself. It actually begins by seeming to encourage the expecting of these by pointing to the fact that, before his martyrdom, Stephen is recorded as having performed 'prodigies and signs among the people through the name of Jesus Christ' (Acts 6. 8). The latter, however, is the point: 'What you see him doing through his memorial chapel, he does in Christ's name: so that Christ may be [...] worshipped'.⁵⁶

After a long description of Stephen's martyrdom and Saul's subsequent conversion, Augustine then does something surprising. After having painted word-pictures, he now points to a material image, presumably a mosaic, showing the stoning of Stephen accompanied by verses — presumably captions — written by Augustine.⁵⁷ From what he says, it seems to be visible to the audience while he is speaking: 'This is a most sweet picture, in which you see the holy Stephen being stoned; you see Saul watching over the clothes of the lapidators. [And] this is Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ'.⁵⁸ Was Saul's conversion into Paul perhaps pictured alongside? Then, however, comes the greatest surprise of all. Instead of using the picture to elicit empathy for the martyr and participation in his victory, as Augustine had done with his mental 'spectacles', he now suddenly addresses the figures

celebrandum in honorem Dei, quem confessus est Stephanus. Nos enim in isto loco non aram fecimus Stephano, sed de reliquiis Stephani aram Deo.'

⁵⁴ Augustine, *Sermo* 318. 3, PL, 38, col. 1440[A]: 'Habetis ergo [...] non parvum solatium, orationum locum'.

⁵⁵ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 422–23, 508, 514.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Sermo* 316. i. 1, PL, 38, col. 1432[C]: 'quidquid videtis quia fit per memoriam Stephani, in nomine Christi fit; ut Christus [...] adoretur'.

⁵⁷ Augustine, *Sermo* 356. 7 (Eraclius) and 316. v. 5 (the picture, presumably a mosaic), respectively PL, 39, col. 1577, and PL 38, col. 1434[C–D], cited in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 414. For the verses, see Augustine, *Sermo* 319. viii, PL, 38, col. 1442[C].

⁵⁸ Augustine, *Sermo* 316. v. 5, PL, 38, col. 1431[C–D]: 'Dulcissima pictura est haec, ubi videtis sanctum Stephanum lapidari, videtis Saulum lapidantium vestimenta servantem. Iste est Paulus Apostolus Christi Iesu, iste est Paulus servus Christi Iesu.'

in the picture instead of his audience, as though they somehow become present in or through it, saying: 'Together there, you see each other; together, you now hear our sermon; together, pray for us. The One who crowned both of you will hear your prayers.'⁵⁹ Here, then, we see Augustine actively using a visible image to induce a sense of presence and to promote prayer to martyrs, ostensibly also for the temporal benefits which he had so passionately disparaged earlier.

Sermon 317 — dated as 425 at the earliest⁶⁰ — speaks of Stephen's relics in a way that assumes their miraculous qualities and distribution over the Mediterranean world to be well known:

He [Stephen] would not visit [all these countries] as a dead man unless he were alive as well as dead. A tiny piece of dust gathers together so many people: the ashes are hidden, the benefactions are visible. [...] Stephen's flesh is spread everywhere, but the merit of his faith is to be [more greatly] commended. Thus we expect to obtain temporal benefits, in order that we may imitate him and deserve to accept eternal ones.⁶¹

What at first may have appeared to Augustine as a paternal indulgent giving of 'toys' to whining children is now apparently accepted as a legitimate strategy — perhaps because popular enthusiasm made it an unavoidable one — of inspiring admiration for the martyr's merits. After a description of Stephen's martyrdom and his seeing of the opened heavens, Augustine concludes: 'How can the one who fell asleep among the stones [thrown by] his enemies be awake in his ashes? He sleeps secure, resting in peace, for he had commended his spirit to the Lord.'⁶² For Augustine, then, God himself is still central in all that happens. And in contrast to Victricius's introduction of new relics to his community, Augustine's audience evidently did not need an elaborate explanation of a phenomenon which they had already abundantly experienced.

Sermon 319 — dated as not earlier than 425⁶³ — also appears to have been held when Stephen's miracles were happening frequently. It begins by stressing once

⁵⁹ Augustine, *Sermo* 316. v. 5, PL, 38, col. 1431[D]: 'Ambo ibi vos videtis; ambo modo sermonum nostrum auditis; ambo pro nobis orate. Ambos vos exaudient qui vos coronavit.'

⁶⁰ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 508, 514.

⁶¹ Augustine, *Sermo* 317. i. 1, PL, 38, col. 1435[A–B]: 'Sed mortuus non visitaret, nisi et mortuus viveret. Exiguus pulvis tantum populum congregavit: cinis latet, beneficia patent. [...] Caro sancti Stephani per loca singula diffamatur: sed fidei eius meritum commendatur. Sic exspectemus consequi temporalia beneficia, ut eum imitando accipere mereamur aeterna.'

⁶² Augustine, *Sermo* 317. iv. 5, PL, 38, col. 1437[D]: 'Qui inter lapides inimicorum dormivit, quomodo in suis cineribus vigilabit? Dormivit securus, quietus in pace; quia spiritum suum Domino commendavit.'

⁶³ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 508, 515.

more that Stephen's miracles were done through his being a servant of Christ, who is the one to be worshipped. After Stephen's patience and humility during his passion and his imitation of Christ's passion are again celebrated, an encouragement follows for those who may be disappointed with the martyr:

I commend this to you, beloved, that you know that his prayers attain much, but not everything. For we find even in the pamphlets that are given that there have been difficulties of attainment, but that the benefit was later nevertheless received if the faith of the praying one did not slacken. They did not stop, they continued to pray, and thereafter God granted [the benefit] through Stephen.⁶⁴

He concludes by emphasizing again that the benefits are obtained 'per conservum [...], honorem et gloriam Domino demus' (through our fellow servant [...], and [that] we owe honour and glory to our Lord), and then points to four lines of verse — unfortunately not quoted — which he has had inscribed on the wall in what must be the chapel (*cella*) of Stephen: 'read them, remember them, keep them in your heart. [...] Let it not be necessary for a book to be sought: let that room be your book.'⁶⁵

The next five sermons as they appear in print centre around what turned out to be two cures just before and during the church services at Easter and the days thereafter in the year 425.⁶⁶ A somewhat fuller description is given in the *City of God*. A brother and sister, Paulus and Palladia, had arrived in the city from the east seeking a cure of their common ailment. Because, along with the rest of their brothers and sisters, they had wronged their recently widowed mother, she laid a curse on all of them and 'they were afflicted with such a severe punishment from Heaven' that all incurred a hideous tremor in their bodies.⁶⁷ The effect of ensorcellment has been described as invading and affecting the body on a preverbal level; something similar could have happened here.⁶⁸ From about fifteen days before

⁶⁴ Augustine, *Sermo* 319. vi. 6, PL, 38, col. 1442[A]: 'Ergo hoc commendo Charitati vestrae, ut sciatis quod orationes eius multa impetrant, non tamen omnia. Nam invenimus etiam in libellis qui dantur, fuisse illi difficultates impetrandi, et accepisse tamen postea beneficium, non deficiente supplicis fide. Non cessatum est, oratum est, et dedit postea Deus per Stephanum.'

⁶⁵ Augustine, *Sermo* 319. viii, PL, 38, col. 1442[C]: 'legite, tenete, in corde habete. [...] Non opus est ut quaeretur codex: camera illa codex vester sit.'

⁶⁶ Kunzelmann, 'Chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus', pp. 509, 515.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 414–15, CCSL, 48, p. 825: 'tali poena sunt divinitus coerciti, ut horribiliter quaterentur omnes tremore membrorum'. On curses in this period, see Brun, *Segen und Fluch im Urchristentum*, and Hopfner, 'Mageia'; cf. *Beyond Rationalism*, ed. by Kapferer, on modern observations and theories about these as present-day phenomena.

⁶⁸ Devisch, 'Maleficent Fetishes and the Sensual Order of the Uncanny', pp. 175–97.

Easter, they came to Augustine's church daily and especially visited Stephen's relics. Then on Easter Sunday,

in the morning, when there was now a large crowd present, and the young man was holding the bars of the holy place where the relics were, and praying, he suddenly fell down and lay precisely as if asleep, but not trembling as he usually did even in sleep. All present were astonished. Some were alarmed, some were moved with pity; and while some were for lifting him up, others prevented them, and said they should rather wait and see what would happen. And behold! he rose up, and trembled no more, for he was healed, and stood quite well, looking at those who were looking at him. Who then refrained from praising God? The whole church was filled with the voices of those who were shouting and congratulating him. Then they came running to me, where I was sitting ready to come into the church.⁶⁹

Similar collapses preceding a cure have been noted in the Middle Ages⁷⁰ and in modern times, especially during public sessions of faith healing.⁷¹ After silence had finally been obtained and the liturgy celebrated, Augustine, evidently deeply moved, excused himself from giving a sermon that day. His words have been preserved in sermon 320:

We are used to hearing pamphlets about the miracles of God through the prayers of the most holy martyr Stephen. This pamphlet is a seeing: instead of the written word, instant knowledge; instead of a document, a face is shown. You who know what you used to grieve to see in him, now rejoice and read what you see (*legite quod videtis*) so that the Lord our God may be honoured more abundantly, and so that what is [usually] written up in a pamphlet may be inscribed in your memory. Forgive me if I do not give a longer sermon: for you are aware of my tiredness.⁷²

⁶⁹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 426–38, CCSL, 48, pp. 825–26: 'cum iam frequens populus praesens esset et loci sancti cancellos, ubi martyrium erat, idem iuvenis orans teneret, repente prostratus est et dormienti simillimus iacuit, non tamen tremens, sicut etiam per somnium solebant. Stupentibus qui aderant atque aliis paventibus, aliis dolentibus, cum eum quidam vellent erigere, nuncnulli prohibuerunt et potius exitum expectandum esse dixerunt. Et ecce surrexit, et non tremebat, quoniam sanatus erat, et stabat incolumis, intuens intuentes. Quis ergo se tenuit a laudibus Dei? Clamantium gratulantiumque vocibus ecclesia usquequaque completa est. Inde ad me curritur, ubi sedebam iam processurus.'

⁷⁰ Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, p. 241.

⁷¹ Sargant, *Mind Possessed*, pp. 3–32; Kelsey, *Discernment*, pp. 10–50.

⁷² Augustine, *Sermo* 320, PL, 38, col. 1442[D]: 'De miraculis Dei per orationes beatissimi martyris Stephani libellos solemus audire. Libellus huius, aspectus est; pro scriptura notitia, pro charta facies demonstratur. Qui nosis quid in illo dolentes videre soleatis, in praesenti gaudentes legite quod videtis: ut Dominus Deus noster abundatius honoretur, et quod in libello conscriptum est, in vestram memoriam conscribatur. Date veniam, quia diuturnum non reddo sermonem: nosis etenim fatigationem meam.'

The memory as well as the understanding of the event 'read' as a message from God, then, is now to be 'inscribed' (as though it were already in letters) in the heart. The metaphors betray a thoroughly logocentric approach to the faith.

That evening the young man dined with him and told his story. This oral presentation is likely to have been taken down and later written out by the same stenographers who preserved the Bishop's sermons. In this written version, as will be seen, Augustine himself may also have done a bit of editing. The next day he again did not give a proper sermon but said that the cured man's narrative was being prepared and promised to have it read the day after. On the third day after Easter, he made brother and sister — one healed, the other still trembling — stand in front of the people while the pamphlet was read, presumably by a lector. It is the only one that is extant of the many which Augustine had caused to be written up.⁷³

In their home town of Caesarea in Cappadocia, the pamphlet tells us, Paul's elder brother had physically mistreated their recently widowed mother and the other, younger, children had not interfered or protected her. On her way to the baptismal font to ask the Lord to curse this brother, a demon appeared to her in the appearance of their paternal uncle who incited her to curse all of her ten children. Confused and uncertain through her grief, she assented and asked the Lord strenuously to make her children exiles wandering in strange lands. At once, the elder brother was seized by a hideous shaking in his limbs, and within a year the other children too incurred this. Thereupon their mother, seeing the consequence of her ill-considered request, fell prey to such a desperate remorse that she hung herself. The children dispersed into other lands. The eldest was eventually cured by the martyr Lawrence in Ravenna. Paul and his sister Palladia sought a cure at many places, including Ancona where, they had heard, Stephen had performed many miracles. But they had also heard of Stephen's miracles at Uzalis, in north Africa.

Three months ago from this day, both Paul and his sister were admonished in a vision. To Paul appeared 'quidam aspectu clarus, et candido crine venerabilis' (a certain man with a shining appearance and venerable through his white hair) who said that he would be cured within three months.⁷⁴ There is no description of Stephen's physical appearance in Acts; although the unidentified image again resembles that of the luminous Christ in Revelation (Revelation 1. 14), it is likely

⁷³ It is contained in Augustine, *Sermo* 322, PL, 38, cols 1443[B]–1445[A]. On this pamphlet and on Augustine's pamphlets in general, as well as a comparison between his stories and those of the Uzalis collection, see Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 269–78.

⁷⁴ On dreams announcing a cure in the Middle Ages, see Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*, pp. 217–22.

to have been thought of as an apparition of the martyr — or perhaps of Augustine. For it is said that to Paul's sister Palladia 'in visione, Sanctitas tua in ea effigie, in qua te praesentes videmus, apparuit' (Your Holiness appeared in a vision, in the appearance in which we now see you to be present).⁷⁵ Compared with the naiver presentation in the Uzalis collection, this phrasing seems to point to a bit of subtle editing. Paul says that he saw Augustine again and again later while they travelled. As the text stands, these visions were understood to indicate that they should come to Hippo to be healed. In all this, however, I suspect that Augustine again intervened to suppress something: Paul and Palladia's expectation, shimmering nonetheless through the reported dreams, that the Bishop himself would (also) be somehow instrumental in their healing — as Ambrose had been believed to be. Augustine's reservations about dreams are also likely to have been responsible for the fact that, compared with those in the Uzalis collection, there are conspicuously fewer of them mentioned in his reports about the miracles in and around Hippo. After he and his sister had arrived in Hippo two weeks earlier, Paul continues,

Every day, I prayed with many tears in the place where the shrine of the most glorious martyr Stephen is. On Easter day, however, as those who were present saw, as I held onto the railing [around the altar containing the reliquary], praying and weeping strenuously, I suddenly fell to the ground. Robbed of my sensory awareness, I do not know where I was. After a while, I stood up and no longer found that tremor in my body.⁷⁶

Paul, then, had heard about Stephen's many miracles and was given confidence that he would be healed by the vision and promise of an inspiring heavenly figure. He is likely to have visualized it as the saint as he prayed and wept while at the same time touching the railing around the shrine. As will also become evident in the stories of the other miracles, for the people involved, alongside prayer, *touch* is seen to be the central mode of access to what, as Augustine insists, is Christ's healing power, mediated by the saint.⁷⁷

When the reading of the pamphlet was finished, Augustine writes, he sent Paul and his sister out of the public gaze to discuss the matter somewhat more carefully. This is recorded in sermon 323.⁷⁸ In it he urges everyone to respect their parents

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Sermo* 322, PL, 38, col. 1444[B].

⁷⁶ Augustine, *Sermo* 322, PL, 38, col. 1444 [C–D]: 'Orabam ergo quotidie cum magnis lacrymis in loco ubi est memoria gloriosissimi martyris Stephani. Die autem dominico Paschae, sicut alii qui praesentes erant, viderunt, subito cecidi. Alienatus autem a sensu, ubi fuerim nescio. Post paululum assurrexi, et illum tremorem in corpore meo non inveni.'

⁷⁷ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, pp. 24–39, sees this as indicative of the general shift from the 'touch of the transcendent', as in Plotinus and Origen, to 'the touch of the real', in Victricius.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *Sermo* 323, PL, 38, cols 1445[A]– 1446[C].

and warns against the effects of their being offended. Then, deprecatingly, he wonders how he could have appeared to these young people earlier without himself being aware of it, and also why Stephen reserved this miracle for Hippo when the shrine in Ancona was much older and so many miracles had already happened in Uzalis, where they had also been. In the *City of God* he tells us what happened when he was beginning to relate one of these miracles; suddenly

other voices are heard from the shrine of the martyr, shouting new congratulations. My audience turned around and began to run towards it. The young woman, when she had come down from the steps where she had been standing and had gone to pray at the holy relics, as soon as she had touched the railing she collapsed in the same way, as though asleep, and then rose up cured. While we were therefore asking what had happened, and what had occasioned this joyous shouting, they came into the basilica where we were, leading her from the martyr's shrine in perfect health. Then, indeed, such a shout of wonder rose from men and women together, that the exclamations and the tears seemed never to come to an end. She was led to stand to the place where she had stood a bit earlier, still trembling. [...] [Then] everyone exulted, shouting the praise of God without words with such loudness that our ears could scarcely bear it. What was there in the hearts of these jubilant people but the faith of Christ, for which Stephen had shed his blood?⁷⁹

The phrase 'as soon as she had touched the railing' is significant: Augustine here admits that healing power was here transmitted through contact even before prayer had taken place. When everyone had finally quieted down Augustine finished his sermon with a quotation from Psalm 31. 5 (32. 5): 'I will confess my transgression to the Lord my God, and you forgave the impiety of my heart.' Healing, then, is also a confession of sins and a granting of forgiveness. Augustine thereupon commended brother and sister to everyone's prayers, saying that before the congregation had begun to pray for them, their request had already been granted.

As we have seen, brother and sister had been coming to the church for two weeks and are likely to have been present during Augustine's sermons. Since Stephen's passion story was read in this period, Augustine will have preached also about it and

⁷⁹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 464–81, CCSL, 48, pp. 826–27: 'cum ecce me disputante voces aliae de memoria martyris novae gratulationis audiuntur. Conversi sunt eo, qui me audiebant, coeperuntque concurrere. Illa enim, ubi de gradibus descendit in quibus steterat, ad sanctum martyrem orare perrexerat; quae mox ut cancellos adtigit, conlapsa similiter velut in somnum sana surrexit. Dum ergo requireremus quid factum fuerit, unde ille strepitus laetus extiterit, ingressi sunt cum illa in basilicam, in qua eramus, adducentes eam sanam de martyris loco. Tum vero tantus ab utroque sexu admirationis clamor exortus est, ut vox continuata cum lacrimis non videretur posse finiri. Perducta est ad eum locum, ubi paulo ante steterat tremens. [...] Exultabant in Dei laudem voce sine verbis, tanto sonitu, quantum nostrae aures ferre vix possent. Quid erat in cordibus exultantium nisi fides Christi, pro qua Stephani sanguis effusus est?'

about the martyr's forgiveness of his enemies — perhaps in one of the not precisely datable sermons just discussed. It is very tempting to suppose that these moved their hearts to put aside their anger, to become reconciled to their mother and now to be confident of divine forgiveness for themselves, and — perhaps through the picture of Stephen they would be looking at every day in the chapel — to experience the saint as actually present. Liberation from a debilitating oppression and sense of sin through forgiveness of others and through the compassionate personal action of the saint — himself, conflated with Christ, probably as visualized earlier and remembered as such — appears to be the transformational pattern in this cure. In the next day's sermon,⁸⁰ Augustine completed the story of the miracle of an infant in Uzalis who was resuscitated long enough to be baptized. And — perhaps again wishing to deflect attention from his own possible role — he wonders why, if the martyr could do this, he did not cure the two eastern visitors there.

Another sermon from this period, finally, shows Augustine empathizing with his parishioners' yearning for miracles in his comments upon the passage in Matthew 7. 7–8: 'Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you; for everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.' How should we understand this, he asks, when we know that so many who ask do not receive? Or are we wrong in thinking that we do not receive? The apostle Paul's request to be relieved of his pain was not granted; and in the present time, we see the wicked asking and receiving, and the good asking and not receiving. Like a good doctor, however, God gives what he considers good for the asker's eternal health and salvation, not for his temporal cravings; as with the apostle Paul, interior grace should be enough, for virtue is perfected in infirmity.⁸¹

Then pointing to the fact that everyone can see people daily receiving and not receiving miracles at Stephen's shrine, Augustine admonishes those who did not not to feel abandoned and to ask themselves if they prayed with faith. If they did, they received, if not physical, then certainly spiritual health. Is the gift of eternal life, then, 'nothing'? If they did receive physical health, let them use it well; for if they do not, it would be better for their soul to be ill. Moreover, let no one who has been healed feel that he is stronger in faith than one who is not healed, for that can be, not only because he did not ask in faith, but possibly also because he is, on the contrary, stronger in faith and patience, like the apostle.⁸²

⁸⁰ Augustine, *Sermo* 324, PL, 38, cols 1446[D]–1447[C].

⁸¹ Augustine, *Sermo*, Wilmart XII. 1–4, ed. by Morin, pp. 706–08. Cf. II Corinthians 12. 7–9.

⁸² Augustine, *Sermo*, Wilmart XII. 5, ed. by Morin, pp. 708–09.

In these sermons about the martyrs we see what looks like a development from a focus upon spiritual imitation only, to one that added asking for their prayers, and finally to one that also included appreciating their present miracles. Like the story of Stephen's martyrdom, however, Augustine wants even the visual impression of these happening miracles to be 'read' as though they were the words of a written pamphlet. For him, then, a miracle remained in essence an interior transformation whose visible manifestation is a message from God that leads men to seek and find him. For him the real apprehension of God was listening to his 'speaking', through events as well as through words.

'Many Incredible Facts': Contemporary Miracles as Proofs of the Martyrs' Resurrection

As already indicated, the last book of Augustine's *City of God* also contains a number of mostly brief descriptions of other miracles.⁸³ These are now adduced as proofs of the martyrs' resurrection, and that in turn manifests the truth of the Christian faith and its promise of everlasting life in a new spiritual body. Augustine, however, does not explicitly associate this resurrection with the imminent return of Christ as Ambrose had done. He simply says: 'we have collected a huge number of testimonies to many incredible facts' to add to the apostles' testimony of the truth of the resurrection.⁸⁴ This single doctrinal point now replaces Augustine's explanations of the details of Christ's miracles as different aspects of the larger message of his salvation of mankind. His former argument, too, that it is not the miracle itself but the Catholic context within which it occurs, evidently no longer needs to be brought forward for since 411 everyone, except for a group of self-proclaimed recalcitrants, is now officially of the same faith. This relatively new situation, after a hundred years of schism, will have removed the intransigence against contemporary miracles that had been caused by the Donatists' use of their miracles to prove the truth of *their* version of the Christian faith.

Chapter eight of the *City of God*'s twenty-second book begins by answering those — pagans? — who ask why Christ's former miracles are not happening now by pointing to the fact that these had been necessary in apostolic times to induce the world to believe in Christ's resurrection, and then says that, nevertheless,

⁸³ Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 262–69, has looked at their mutual similarities and differences and their possible dates.

⁸⁴ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 5, lines 66–67, CCSL, 48, p. 811.

even now miracles happen in his name, whether through his sacraments or through the prayers or the shrines of his saints; but they do not shine with the same brightness so as to cause them to be published with as much glory as accompanied the former miracles.⁸⁵

To cause them to be better known therefore, as he explains later, he has instituted the custom of having narratives of these events written for public recital in church; the brief descriptions that follow appear to be summaries of some of these pamphlets (*libelli*).⁸⁶ The first eleven are of miracles that happened in various contexts; thereafter he clusters those around Stephen. Thus he begins with remembering Gervasius and Protasius's cure in 386 of the blind man in Milan, and then — after forty years of silence about it — finally gives the lengthy description of Innocentius's cure through prayer which we examined earlier.

Three cures connected with the sacrament of baptism follow. The first is a relatively longer story about a woman, Innocentia, also an inhabitant of Carthage, who had cancer of the breast and had been given up by her physician.⁸⁷ Advised in a dream, however, to ask the first woman who had just been baptized to make the sign of the Cross over her sore, she did so and was cured at once. Augustine reports that when he heard about it he was indignant that she had not reported this miracle and made her tell about it in great detail in the presence of her friends. Another cure through what must be the grace acquired in baptism is that of a gouty doctor who did not let dreams of pain-inflicting black woolly-haired boys deter him from baptism and was cured as soon as this was performed.⁸⁸ A third person, an old comedian of Curubis, who was cured through baptism, this time of paralysis and hernia, was made to come to Carthage to report upon it by order of its bishop, Aurelius,⁸⁹ with whom Augustine was then perhaps staying.

The sacrament of Eucharist too, however, helped to precipitate a miracle. Its celebration, together with prayers by the officiating priests, expelled evil spirits from an estate. After this, the estate's owner Hesperius gave a piece of earth brought from Jerusalem, which he had been given by a friend, to Augustine and a colleague, then in the vicinity, so that it might become the centre of a place of prayer. When this

⁸⁵ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 25–28, CCSL 48, pp. 815–16: 'Nam etiam nunc fiunt miracula in eius nomine, sive per sacramenta eius sive per orationes vel memorias sanctorum eius; sed non eadem claritate inlustrantur, ut quanta illa gloria diffamentur.'

⁸⁶ Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 258–69, describes their character and possible dates and identifies the relics.

⁸⁷ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 136–71, CCSL, 48, pp. 818–19.

⁸⁸ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 172–82, CCSL, 48, p. 819.

⁸⁹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 183–92, CCSL, 48, pp. 819–20.

had been carried out, a young man who was a paralytic went there, prayed, and was healed.⁹⁰ The implication is, of course, that this earth too, upon which Christ had once walked, had helped to bring him to the spot to drive out evil spirits causing the illness. Augustine had earlier castigated this kind of devotion in the Donatists.⁹¹

The next miracle is associated with the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius and takes place in an estate called Victoriana not far from Hippo, where there was a chapel for them.⁹² A young man who had been seized by an evil spirit as he was letting his horse drink from a stream at noon — ostensibly, the spirit is regarded as the noonday demon mentioned in Psalm 90 (91). 6 — was laid there, looking lifeless. When the lady of the estate came with her attendants for her evening prayers and hymns, the youth woke up through the sound, jumped up, and seized the altar, holding on to it, screaming, while the evil spirit lamented and confessed its crime through his mouth. When it finally departed, it pushed the young man's eye out onto his cheek and left it dangling. His sister's husband, who had brought him there, then put the eye back in its place and bound it up with his handkerchief, saying that the God who had expelled the demon would take care of this too. When the bandage was removed seven days later, the eye was indeed found to be healthy. The cure here, then, takes place through the touch of what were probably relics of the martyrs, mediated by the altar in which they had been placed, coupled with devotional prayers and singing that must have been understood as invoking the presence of Christ's holy power.

A young woman of Hippo too was exorcized of an evil spirit after she had anointed herself with oil mixed with the tears of the priest who had been praying for her;⁹³ this looks like the anointment of the sick prescribed in the letter of James, but carried out by the lady herself. When Augustine then adds that he knew about a bishop's prayer for a demon-possessed young man at a distance that effected instant healing, the implication appears to be that the clergy too, as sanctified persons, can transmit or channel grace.

The last story before Augustine goes on to describe the miracles of Stephen is that of a tailor and fellow townsman, Florentius, who did not have money to pay for his lost coat and prayed to the Twenty Martyrs in their shrine in town for fifty

⁹⁰ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 193–214, CCLSL, 48, p. 820.

⁹¹ Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques en Afrique chrétienne*, pp. 267 and 238, referring to Augustine, *Epist.* 52. 2, CSEL 34. 1, p. 150.

⁹² Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 215–42, CCLSL, 48, pp. 820–21.

⁹³ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 243–47, CCLSL, 48, p. 821.

pence to buy another.⁹⁴ After that he saw a large fish which had just washed ashore, caught it, and got three hundred pence for it from a cook. From this he bought wool for his wife to make into a coat for him. The cook, however, found a gold ring in the fish's belly, which he — moved, Augustine says, by compassion but also by fear (presumably of the martyrs' possible vengeance) — gave to the tailor, saying: 'See how the Twenty Martyrs have clothed you!'⁹⁵

The following undated ten short miracle stories are associated with the relics of Stephen, and all involve, usually mediated, contact.⁹⁶ While his relics were being carried to the waters of Tibilis, a blind woman who was given the flowers accompanying the casket and applied these to her eyes was instantly healed through this indirect contact. While Lucillus, bishop of Sinaita, was carrying in a procession some relics that had been deposited in that castle, his fistulae — which his physician was waiting to excise — disappeared. The Spanish priest Eucharius was cured at Calama by Bishop Possidius's bringing him Stephen's relics, presumably to touch and pray over. Afterwards he was raised from death by the help of the same martyr, through the laying on his body of a priest's cloak which had been brought from the chapel. Indirect contact this time. In the following deathbed conversion of the nobleman Martial, his son-in-law's prayer — characteristically, 'with great groaning and tears'⁹⁷ — at Stephen's shrine is combined with contact through flowers that had presumably touched the altar under which the relics were placed; the nobleman died with Stephen's last words on his lips. Two men in the same town were cured of gout: the first, a citizen, in an unspecified way; the other, a stranger, was told — presumably in a dream — to come and ask again when the pain returned. In the shrine for Stephen in the church on the estate of Audurus, a little boy who had come under an ox cart was revived and healed after his mother had laid him by the shrine. A religious lady living on a neighbouring estate was raised from death by being wrapped in her dress which had been in touch with the shrine. The same happened to the daughter of a Syrian living in Hippo. Another dead man, Irenaeus, a tax-gatherer, was restored to life when his body was anointed with oil of the same martyr; that of a lamp standing on or near the altar containing relics will have been

⁹⁴ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 248–64, CCSL, 48, p. 821.

⁹⁵ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 263–64, CCSL, 48, p. 821: 'Ecce quo modo te viginti martyres vestierunt!'

⁹⁶ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 265–338, CCSL, 48, pp. 821–23.

⁹⁷ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, line 294, CCSL, 48, p. 822: 'ingenti gemitu et fletu'. Cf. Augustine, *Sermo*, Morin XVI. 7, ed. by Morin, p. 656, lines 27–29, 30: 'lacrimae [...] habent voces suas, sicut sanguis Abel habuit vocem suam. [...] lacrimae sanguis cordis est'.

meant. Finally, when the tribune Eleusinus laid his dead infant son on the martyr's shrine and prayed with many tears, he took up his child alive again. The tears and groaning we have seen preceding cures appear to have been experienced, not only as the insistent knocking on the door of a friend which Jesus had advised (Matthew 7. 7), but also as a kind of visible purification from sin.⁹⁸

These stories appear to derive from pamphlets written up in Calama and Hippo. Augustine says that he knows for a fact that many more miracles happened in Hippo than the almost seventy that have been written up there up to the time of his writing, and that even more happened at Calama.⁹⁹ Knowing that many miracles happened through Stephen's relics in Uzalis too, he hopes that they are now being preserved in writing as well. By way of example, he then tells the story of a noblewoman of Carthage, Petronia, who had been cured at Stephen's shrine in Uzalis of a longstanding illness while he was there.¹⁰⁰ Did he hear the story from her own lips, and did this finally convince him of contemporary miracles? In any case, he says, he urged her to publish an account of it that might be read to the people. He does not tell us how she was actually healed at Stephen's shrine there, but about a sign that the martyr gave her beforehand, on her journey. She had been persuaded by a Jew to carry an amulet tied in a hair girdle on her body: a ring set with a stone that had been found in the kidneys of an ox. On her way, near a river, however, she suddenly saw the ring lying at her feet. Inspecting her girdle, she saw that it was still tightly knotted, but also that the ring was whole — a miracle. Convinced that this was a sign by the martyr, a pledge of her future cure in Uzalis, she threw both into the river. Augustine adds, however, that this story is not believed by those who do not (or will not) believe that Christ came forth from his mother's womb without destroying her virginity or that, after his resurrection, he entered the room where his disciples were through a shut door (John 20. 19). In short, it is the same miraculous pattern, and this story, as all the others he has just told, shows that the faith for which the martyr laid down his life is true. Augustine sums up:

Even now, therefore, many miracles are carried out, the same God who did those we read about still performing them by whom he wills and in the manner that he wills; but they are not as well known.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ See Adnès, 'Larmes'.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 354–59, CCSL, 48, p. 824.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 360–96, CCSL, 48, pp. 824–25.

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, lines 396–99, CCSL, 48, p. 825: 'Fiunt ergo etiam nunc multa miracula eodem Deo faciente per quos vult et quem ad modum vult, qui et illa quae legimus fecit; sed ista nec similiter innotescunt.'

This was the reason for the pamphlets. The story of Paul and Palladia follows.

That even now, however, Augustine does not try to fit all the miracles he knows about into one mould is evident when, after his review of the new miracles, he concludes:

For whether God himself effected these miracles by that wonderful manner of working by which, though himself eternal, he produces effects in time; or whether he effected them by his servants, and if so, whether he made use of spirits of martyrs as he uses men who are still in the body, or effects all these marvels by means of angels, over whom he exerts an invisible, immutable, incorporeal sway, so that what is said to be done by the martyrs is done not by their operation, but only by their prayer and request; or whether, finally, some things are done in one way and others in another, and so that man cannot at all comprehend them — nevertheless these miracles attest to this faith which preaches the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life.¹⁰²

An implicit connection may be made here between the healing of the flesh at that moment and the renewal of the flesh in eternal life; Augustine is now including the body in salvation.¹⁰³ These stories, in which divine energy seems to hover in and radiate through ‘sanctified’ objects, acts, and persons when addressed or activated through focused prayer and contact, confirm that, as Walter Goffart has correctly observed, in the sixth century Gregory of Tours was no more ‘superstitious’ than Augustine had been.¹⁰⁴ This mentality was not of his own making: he was confronted with what was suddenly happening ‘on the ground’ when Stephen’s relics arrived among the people in his church, which now included reconciled Donatists. And he perceived that, whatever reservations he may have had about the process, in one way or another the people’s petitions resulted in real healing.

It looks as though, after repressing and trying for decades to divert attention from this yearning for miracles among his people, Augustine — in Uzalis at last convinced of the occurrence of true miracles in his time — brought the martyr’s relics to his city also to give his people an authentic way to realize their pent-up

¹⁰² Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 9, lines 14–25, CCSL, 48, pp. 827–28: ‘Sive enim Deus ipse per se ipsum miro modo, quo res temporales operatur aeternus, sive per suos ministros facit, sive quaedam facit etiam per martyrum spiritus, sicut per homines adhuc in corpore constitutos, sive omnia ista per angelos, quibus invisibiliter, incorporaliter, inmutabiliter imperat, operetur, ut, quae per martyres fieri dicuntur, eis orantibus tantum et inpetrantibus, non etiam operantibus fiant; sive alia istis, alia illis modis, qui nullo modo comprehendere a mortalibus possunt: ei tamen adtestantur haec fidei, in qua carnis in aeternum resurrectio praedicatur.’

¹⁰³ See Miles, *Augustine on the Body*.

¹⁰⁴ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 142.

wishes. Not only that, he also sent parts of these relics — or perhaps contact-relics — to others.¹⁰⁵ He did not try to explain the new role of contact with ostensibly power-laden relics in miracles as Victricius had done, but interpreted them as a new kind of visible proof of the truth of the faith. Although we have seen that his contemporaries — Ambrose, Sulpicius Severus, Paulinus of Nola, and the author of the *Miracles of Stephen* (and this implies the inclusion of his bishop, Augustine's friend Evodius) — all fitted the new phenomena into an adjusted world view that interpreted the miracles as evidence of the imminence of Christ's Second Coming, Augustine, when he was writing the last book of his *City of God* in 427, did not connect them with this and, at least publicly, maintained the unknowability of its timing.¹⁰⁶

Two additional miracle stories appear in later works. In a discussion with a certain Julian, apparently a Manichee, that is dated 429–30, Augustine mentions the case of the boy Acatius, living in his vicinity, who had been born with closed eyes, like the man in John's Gospel (John 9). His mother did not permit doctors to try to open them with their iron knives but instead, when he was five years old, had a plaster containing the Eucharist put on them and this healed him.¹⁰⁷ And in a letter in the same period to his friend Bishop Alypius, he tells about a physician who promised to become a Christian if his daughter was healed but reneged, was led by blindness to renew his promise but reneged again, and was finally induced to fulfil his vow by total paralysis and muteness, which disappeared when the baptism had taken place.¹⁰⁸ This last story has a proto-medieval ring.

In spite of Augustine's continued resistance to visible miracles, his biographer could not resist attributing a few to his person. Thus he is said to have cured certain possessed persons through prayer with tears, and upon his deathbed — although he at first strenuously resisted the request — he healed a sick man by laying his hand upon him.¹⁰⁹ Expecting miracles, also from someone who was perceived as a living holy man, had now evidently come to be part of Christian life.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine, *Epist.* 212, CSEL, 57, p. 372, lines 7–10.

¹⁰⁶ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 30, lines 136–38, CCSL, 48, pp. 865–66.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*, CLXII, PL, 45, col. 1315[C–D].

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, *Epist.* 227, CSEL, 57, p. 482, lines 3–22, p. 483, lines 1–8.

¹⁰⁹ Possidius of Calama, *Vita sancti Augustini*, XXIX. 5, lines 18–27, ed. by Bastiaensen, pp. 210–12.

'Read What You See'

Augustine's initial reservations and eventually changing view of contemporary miracles is the product of a contemplative as well as critical disposition — and a healthy distrust of undisciplined imagination. In his own time- and culture-conditioned words, the former rhetor and formidable preacher treated the visible miracle, past or present, as an event that needed to be interpreted — the term he used was to be 'read' — as the 'text' of an edifying divine message. It would open the heart's eyes to recognize God's workings as promised in Scripture, that being the firm base that verifies or falsifies whatever people may think they are seeing or experiencing. For Augustine was well aware of the capriciousness of the human imagination as well as of the possibility of demons playing tricks upon it. As for the cures he reports, although he mentions strenuous praying and weeping as a necessary purification that precedes them, he does not dwell upon this nor upon the transformational moment of a miracle: the latter is simply accepted as the way in which divine power reaches a result which even sustained human effort could never attain.

Similarly, he never felt able to give a definitive answer to basic ontological questions such as whether specific miracles happened through God's direct action, through patterns he had inserted into created things, or through his ministers, and whether the latter could include the spirits of the dead martyrs or if only their intercessory prayers were effective. For him, God's omnipotence made speculation about its ways less useful than constantly attending to him interiorly. Thus, although he sometimes did speak of the martyrs as intercessors, there is no evidence that he himself ever imaginatively associated any of his own experiences with them as we have seen Sulpicius doing with his luminous Martin, Paulinus with his 'guardian' Felix, and the Uzalians with their smiling Stephen.

In his sermons and writings, Augustine speaks often of yearning for God's 'face', as for instance: 'in meditatione mea exardescit ignis ut quaeram faciem tuam semper' (in my meditation a[n inner] fire leaps up [in me] to seek your face forever).¹¹⁰ Of course this was not a human face.¹¹¹ As we saw, he wrote that in this life seeing God 'face to face' was impossible; but when we recognize love in someone's face — recognizing a facial expression as the pattern of a feeling which itself cannot be seen

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, xv. 7. 121–22, lines 118–22, CCSL, 50 A, p. 479. On the meaning of God's 'face' in the Bible, see Tiedtke, 'Face'.

¹¹¹ As Augustine, *Epist.*, 147. xv. 37, CSEL, 44, p. 311, lines 9–11; and Augustine, *Epist.*, 148. iv. 15, CSEL, 44, p. 345, lines 7–10.

— we would 'see' God because he is love.¹¹² God's 'face', then, was an interior and abstract spiritual experience, and Christ was the indwelling, invisible cosmic Word rather than his human appearance. A crucial passage about it in Augustine's *Confessions* shows how he thought God's face would be contemplated in heaven:

let the populations of your angels above the heavens praise you: they do not need to look up at this firmament and to recognize your word by reading. For they see your face always, and there they read without temporal syllables what your eternal will intends. They read, they choose, and they love; they read always and what they read never passes on. For by choosing and by loving they read the very unchangeability of your plan. Their codex is not closed, nor is their book folded, because you yourself are this for them and are for ever.¹¹³

For Augustine, then, God's 'face' is his wordless, invisible, and continuously creative Speaking or Word. 'Reading' or apprehending it appears to be a suprasensory, unitive discerning of its dynamic patterns that exist beyond human words, images, and time.

Refusing to allow the affective surprise of a miracle to paralyse or deform cognitive activity, Augustine, then, regarded miracles, like Scripture, as divine words or texts to be 'read'. His dissecting and often long-winded exegetical presentations were nevertheless intended to present miracles as windows to look through and ladders to be thrown away when they had opened the eyes of the heart to an awed perception of the continuous divine creation in the world and in human minds/hearts. Our next author, the poet Sedulius — either well-acquainted with Augustine's sermons on John's Gospel or having arrived at this same insight independently — attempted to communicate and transmit this experience of the miraculous and continuous divine creation almost exclusively through the imagery with its non-verbal qualities and dynamics about which the great Church Father had continued to be so circumspect. For Augustine, it seems, alongside the daily visible wonders of nature that pointed to God's work, the invisible interior leadings of an uplifting divine grace remained the real miracles.

¹¹² Augustine, *Epist.* 148. v. 18, CSEL, 44, p. 347, lines 4–7.

¹¹³ Augustine, *Conf.*, XIII. 15. 18, lines 26–34, CCSL, 27, p. 251: 'laudent te supercaelestes populi angelorum tuorum, qui non opus habent suspicere firmamentum hoc et legendo cognoscere verbum tuum. vident enim faciem tuam semper, et ibi legunt sine syllabis temporum quid velit aeterna voluntas tua. legunt eligunt et diligunt; semper legunt et numquam praeterit quod legunt. eligendo enim et diligendo legunt ipsam incommutabilitatem consilii tui. non clauditur codex eorum nec plicatur liber eorum, quia tu ipse illis hoc es et es in aeternum.' Translation by Conybeare, in her 'Beyond Word and Image', p. 152.



Figure 7. 'The Cross as the Tree of Life', silver book cover, Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection. Sixth century. Photo copyright Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.

‘LET ALL PERCEIVE WHAT MYSTERIES MIRACLES
MAY TEACH OUR SOULS’: THE MIRACLE STORY
AS SACRAMENT IN SEDULIUS’S *PASCHAL SONG*

Not long, perhaps, after the Uzalians’ dreams of the heavenly Stephen had been committed to writing, a new poetical synthesis of the Gospels, titled the *Paschale carmen* (*Paschal Song*), was produced that presented their events and teachings almost exclusively as and through miracles. For instead of connecting the details of Christ’s miracles to often extraneous points of doctrine, as Ambrose and Augustine had done because they favoured a logocentric approach to religious truth, Sedulius treated their *transformational moments* as themselves making visible the faith’s deepest truths — truths which he hoped would be interiorly enacted, like a sacrament, by the meditative reader. A miracle, then, could now be perceived not only as occupying centre stage in Christian culture, but also as a model of religious understanding. Instead of distinguishing between miracle and mystery as Ambrose had done, Sedulius coalesces them. Thus he introduces an explanation of the salvational symbolism in the cure of the man born blind with the invitation: ‘Cognoscite cuncti, | mystica quid doceant animos miracula nostros’ (Let all perceive what mysteries miracles may teach our souls).¹

To Christians in the early fifth century *mysticum* and its substantive *mysterium* could refer, among other things, not only to a revealed Christian doctrine but also

¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 263–64, CSEL, 10, p. 109. The poetic epic (pp. 14–146) is preceded by a dedicatory letter to a certain Macedonius (*Epistola ad Macedonium*, pp. 1–13.) The volume also contains a prose version of the same work, the *Paschale opus* (pp. 171–303). An earlier, brief version of this chapter appeared in “Let All Perceive What Mysteries Miracles May Teach Our Souls”.

to a liturgical sacrament.² And indeed we see the poet conveying the core of Christ's verbal teachings — which he all but omits as such — through added symbolic imagery and occasional comments that point, explicitly or not, to the central Christian 'mysteries' reflected and actualized in the Church's sacraments. In these descriptions, moreover, the poet keeps pointing to a dynamic image-pattern of fecundity or burgeoning fruitfulness, also where it is not mentioned in the original Gospel text. What is he attempting to communicate with this and with his other images?

Internal evidence — reminiscences of earlier authors — and later notices in and about the manuscripts appear to indicate that Sedulius, about whom we have no other information, lived and worked in Rome in the period 425–50.³ He presents the poem as four books of 'mirabili[a] divin[a]' (divine wonders).⁴ In fact, there are five books, preceded by a dedicatory letter. The first book — ostensibly intended as introduction rather than as part of the actual story⁵ — states the poem's aim and context and gives brief sketches of Old Testament miracles that function implicitly as annunciatory figures of the various ways in which Christ will accomplish his future salvation of mankind. Books two and five present, respectively, the events of Christ's birth and youth, and those of his crucifixion and resurrection, together understood to constitute the foundational 'mystery' and miracle of his salvation of humankind. The central books three and four, embedded in this larger frame, contain Christ's 'smaller' miracles and little else. Until recently, Sedulius's poem received little and unfavourable attention from modern scholars, who saw in it only a decadent version of Roman classical poetry.⁶ It is now beginning to be appreciated for what it intended to be — a non-fictional didactic epic in which Christ is the peace-bringing, divine hero — and its imagery recognized as a creative composite of especially Virgilian poetry and patristic exegesis.⁷ Evidently, it spoke to

² Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, pp. 547–48. Sedulius himself also appears to use *sacramentum* and *mysterium* interchangeably, as in 'evangelicae sacrament[um] doctrinae', *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 7, line 8.

³ Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 135–43; Kirsch, *Laudes sanctorum*, pp. 286–88.

⁴ Sedulius, *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 12, lines 4–5.

⁵ Kirsch, *Laudes sanctorum*, p. 288.

⁶ Notably by Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 460.

⁷ On Sedulius, comprehensive treatments are Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, and Mayr, *Studien zu dem Paschale carmen des christlichen Dichters Sedulius*. Partial studies are van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4'; Mazzega, *Sedulius, Carmen paschale, Buch III*; and Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 135–250. Shorter treatments and older literature are Kirsch, *Laudes sanctorum*, pp. 285–99 (Kirsch regards it as more a didactic work than an epic (p. 294));

the needs of its time, for after its rapid and favourable reception in the fifth century, the poem became a prominent item in the medieval school curriculum.⁸

In this chapter I shall explore Sedulius's understanding of the relation between Christ's 'smaller' miracles, the faith's 'mysteries', the Church's sacraments, and the various images of fruitfulness which keep recurring throughout the poem. First, the author's intentions as presented in his dedicatory letter will be noted, and then his view of the biblical and ecclesiastical context of Christ's miracles as presented in the programmatic statements in the first book. An examination follows of his descriptions of Christ's cures in the Gospels as they are shaped by two dominant images of the human condition to which he refers early in book two. The first is that of living without God in the state of original sin as a spiritual *sterility* which is 'the image of death' because it leads to death; the second, that of the spiritual *fecundity* of 'life' as a return to the originally created resemblance to the image of God (Genesis 1. 26–27). The image-pattern itself of 'life' in and through God, which the restored mankind could hope again to resemble is then sought in the descriptions of specific other events. After this, I shall point to a dynamic root image which Sedulius draws out from the central one of Christ on the Cross in the fifth book as possibly underlying everything he has been attempting to reveal through his descriptions of the miracles. A concluding reflection will explore the poet's view of the relations between miracle, sacrament, Christ as the Word, and his own text.

'The Meadow of Blossoming Plants': Authorial Reflections

The dedicatory letter preceding the poem is addressed to a priest named Macedonius and a group around him of clerics and pious women who appear to have commissioned the work, as Sedulius describes it, to stimulate their 'conlation[es] adsiduae disputationis' (conversations of assiduous disputations) leading them to a 'sancta conversatio' (holy way of life).⁹ In what the poet then presents as his

Witke, *Numen litterarum*, pp. 206–18; Kartschke, *Bibeldichtung*, pp. 41–45; Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien*, pp. 247–52; Herzog, *Die Biblepik der lateinischen Spätantike*, pp. lii–liv; Small, 'Typology in Sedulius' *Carmen paschale*'; Small, 'Rhetoric and Exegesis in Sedulius' *Carmen paschale*'; and van der Laan, 'Imitation créative'.

⁸ Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 128–50; Kirsch, *Laudes sanctorum*, p. 299.

⁹ Sedulius, *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 1, line 1, p. 11, lines 6, 7–8. On his intended audience, see Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 28–39.

personal motivation for producing the poem, the theme of the sterility of life without God versus the fruitfulness of life with God makes its first appearance. During his former occupation of secular studies, Sedulius tells us, he had

used the power of my restless intellect, which divine Providence had generated in me, not for the usefulness of my soul but for an empty life, and so that the ingenuity of the literary discipline might serve not the author, but the games of an unfruitful work. Finally, the compassionate God, the Creator of the world, looked more kindly upon the creature of his handiwork, and no longer tolerated my having the stupid mindset of worldly wisdom; he seasoned my foolish understanding of mortal prudence with heavenly salt. And at once, when the interior veil over the eyes of my heart disappeared, I turned my wandering steps from thorny country paths to the meadow of flowering plants; and with the utmost effort of my better will I dedicated the worship/cultivation of my enlightened heart to God [...] so that divine things might be able to be reverently spoken of and human ones honestly dealt with [...] inviting others by my exhortations about the Truth to the fruit of a good harvest.¹⁰

Scholars are not in agreement about whether this passage reflects conventional Christian authorial rhetoric or (also) the poet's personal experience.¹¹ For the rejection of pagan literature as false in favour of biblical truth had become a commonplace in Christian literature.¹² The closest parallels to Sedulius's passage

¹⁰ Sedulius, *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 2, lines 4–14, p. 3, lines 5–6, p. 4, lines 9–10: 'vim impatientis ingenii, quod divinitatis in me providentia generavit, non utilitate animae sed inani vitae dependerem, et litterariae sollertia disciplinae lusibus infructuosi operis, non auctori serviret. Tandem misericors Deus, rerum conditor, clementius fabricam sui iuris aspexit et stultos in me mundanae sapientiae diutius haberi sensus indoluit ac fatuum prudentiae mortalis ingenium caelesti sale condidit. Moxque ut cordis oculos interior caligo deseruit, per sentes dumosi ruris errantia in herbam florei cespitis revolvi vestigia totoque nisu melioris arbitrii cultum inlustrati pectoris Deo dicavi [...] cum et divina reverenter adseri et humana possint honeste tractari [...] alios exhortationibus veritatis ad frugem bonae messis invitans.' Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, p. 30, n. 23, discussing this passage and its elaboration in the introduction of book one, observes that Augustine, too, had used wasteland imagery for a spiritual condition in his *Conf.*, II. 10. 18, lines 1–2, CCSL, 27, p. 26.

¹¹ Van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', p. 29. Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, p. 29.

¹² Cf. Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 23–29; van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. iii–xi; Mazzega, *Sedulius, Carmen paschale, Buch III*, pp. 12–14. Costanza, 'Da Giovenco a Sedulio', pp. 263–64; Costanza gives a detailed comparison of the prefaces of Juvenius and Sedulius, comparing them also with those of Paulinus of Nola and Prudentius. See also Gärtner, 'Die Musen im Dienste Christi'.

are the use of the term useful (*utile*) in Prudentius,¹³ and the opposition empty (*vanus*) versus salvation-bringing in this context by Paulinus of Nola.¹⁴

But Augustine's words in his *On True Religion*, quoted earlier, could also have stirred the poet's imagination (I have italicized the notions that will be seen to be central in Sedulius's presentation):

Having abandoned and repudiated theatrical and poetic trifles, let us *feed the soul* by a consideration and discussion of the divine Scriptures and let us drink — drained and *feverish* as we are because of the hunger and thirst induced by an *empty/vain curiosity* and by insubstantial phantasms, as though wishing in vain to be refreshed and filled by pictures of food. Let us be educated in a healthy manner through this free and noble play. If it is the wonders (*miracula*) and beauty of shows that delights us, then let us [develop a] desire to see the wisdom 'that extends powerfully from one end [of the world] to the other and *elegantly rules all things*' [Sapientia (Vulgate) 8. 1]. For what is more wonderful (*mirabilis*) than the *incorporeal force that creates and governs the corporeal world*? Or what is more beautiful than its ordering and decorating [the world] as well?¹⁵

Sedulius's unique and recurrent highlighting of the dynamic pattern of fecundity almost certainly points to a personal concern or experience which he wants to communicate to his readers.

The Gospels' spiritual interpretations, in this context, of 'fruit' and 'harvest' are, respectively, an individual's good deeds and the resulting 'treasure in heaven', or a collection of saved souls, and Sedulius occasionally adverts to these.¹⁶ As will be seen, however, his emphasis appears to be on something more subtle: an internally burgeoning state of mind and heart that continuously blossoms and brings forth 'fruit'. The careful work of scholars shows that Sedulius's poem exhibits knowledge of many of the ideas developed in patristic writings, but it cannot be proved that he

¹³ Prudentius, *Cathemerinon*, *Praefatio*, lines 6 and 28–29, CCSL, 126, p. 1: '[Q]uid nos utile tanti spatio temporis egimus?' (What useful thing have I done in all this time?).

¹⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*, x. 33–42, CSEL 30, pp. 25–26, cited in Costanza, 'Da Giovenco a Sedulio', pp. 263–64.

¹⁵ Augustine, *Vera relig.*, LI. 100, lines 1–11, CCSL, 32, p. 252: 'Omissis igitur et repudiatis nugis theatricis et poeticis divinarum scripturarum consideratione et tractatione pascamus animum atque potemus vanae curiositatis fame ac siti fessum et aestuantem et inanibus phantasmatibus tamquam pictis epulis frustra refici satiarique cupientem. Hoc vere liberali et ingenuo ludo salubriter erudiamur. Si nos miracula spectaculorum et pulchritudo delectat, illam desideremus videre sapientiam, "quae pertendit a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suaviter". Quid enim mirabilis vi incorporea mundum corporeum fabricante et administrante? Aut quid pulchrius ordinante et ornante?'

¹⁶ As in Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 58–59 and IV. 150, CSEL, 10, pp. 20 and 101, respectively. On 'fruit' in the Bible, see 'Fruit, Fig, Thorn, Thistle'.

actually saw them; at least some of the notions could have reached him through Church tradition.¹⁷ In this period, as Peter Brown's magisterial study *The Body and Society* shows, the then expanding ascetic community tended to reject sexual relations as a work of the flesh inimical to the spirit and to adopt the notion of spiritual fecundity as a better alternative to the physical kind.¹⁸ Thus Sedulius's notion may resemble what Ambrose had spoken of as 'fecunditas animae' (the fecundity of the soul) with its 'offspring' of virtues and good works for everyone, but especially for consecrated virgins.¹⁹ Jerome also stressed the spiritual fecundity of ascetics.²⁰

It is in Augustine's writings, however, that Sedulius could have found a many-tiered notion of an all-determining divine fecundity in nature and in the soul and mind of man. Thus, as we saw, Augustine says 'when one considers the power of a single grain of whatever kind of seed, how great a thing it is, awe seizes whoever looks at it'.²¹ And he speaks of it in a spiritual sense as

the more abundant and more fecund happiness that is not to become full in the body but to grow in the mind, not to lactate from the chest but to glow from the heart, to give birth not to earth from the inner parts but to heaven through prayers.²²

This as well as his view of the original divinely created fecundity in nature and in human souls, expressed in the passage below, may be the subtext of what Sedulius will be seen attempting to communicate (I have again italicized notions that resemble those in Sedulius):

¹⁷ On Sedulius's handling of patristic material, see Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 226–44; lists including Bible passages and reminiscences of classical literature in CSEL, 10, pp. 421–30, 487–99.

¹⁸ Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 339–427 (for the west).

¹⁹ Respectively, Ambrose, *De Isaac vel anima*, IV. 16 and VII. 60, CSEL 32. 1, p. 654, line 15, and pp. 683–85. Ambrose, *De institutione Virginis et S. Mariae virginitate perpetua*, XII. 79 and XIII. 81, PL, 16, col. 339B and col. 339D, speaks of 'fertility' in Mary as a virgin dedicated to God (cited in Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 363).

²⁰ Jerome, *Epist.* 52. 4. 2, CSEL, 54, p. 420, lines 12–14: 'Inpolluta est virginitatisque perpetuae et in similitudinem Mariae, cum cotidie generet semperque parturiat, incorrupta est'.

²¹ Augustine, *Tract.*, VIII. 1, lines 12–14, CCSL, 36, p. 82: 'Si consideret, vim unius grani cuiuslibet seminis, magna quaedam res est, horror est consideranti'.

²² Augustine, *Epist.* 150, CSEL, 44, p. 381, lines 17–20: 'haec est uberior fecundior que felicitas non ventre gravescere sed mente grandescere, non lactescere pectore sed corde candescere, non visceribus terram sed caelum orationibus parturire'. The expression *mens fecunda Deo* was later used for Saint Radegund of Poitiers by her admirer and friend Venantius Fortunatus in *Carmina*, VIII. 9. 1, ed. by Reydellet, p. 152; cf. de Nie, "Consciousness Fecund through God".

as in that day man is nourished, and the animals with him, with the seeds of plants, fruit-bearing trees, and green leaves, thus in that age every spiritual man was a good servant of Christ and imitated him as well as possible, while he was nourished along with that people by the *food of the holy Scriptures* and the divine law: partly to *conceive fecundity of thoughts* and sayings as though by the seeds of plants; partly to [produce] useful conduct for human living, as though by fruit-bearing trees; and partly to arouse strength in faith, hope, and love leading to the eternal life, as though by green leaves that are *flourishing* and which no scorching heat of tribulations can cause to wither.²³

Augustine's advice is clearly to everyone, not just ascetics. And so, as I perceive it, is Sedulius's. In his passage, the meadow — reminiscent of Virgil's description of the Elysian fields²⁴ — seems to figure and exhibit the quality of this experience of Paradise; it is the central ideal towards which everything moves. In present-day psychology, however, the image of the flowering meadow is regarded as evoking the carefree bliss of childhood and used in guided daydream therapies to remove the subject's defences and make possible the awareness of deeper affective states.²⁵ Sedulius's poetry is almost certainly also intended to evoke this deeper meditative state in the reader.

The Bible having recently been given a new, and now complete, translation into Latin by Jerome, how could a much reduced and poetic version of the Gospels lead to sanctifying conversations in Macedonius's group? Sedulius gives as his reason that — implicitly, like the Psalms — the delightful form of its truth would cause it to be eagerly accepted into the heart, often repeated, and imprinted upon the memory; thereby, its readers would more willingly come to know God.²⁶ As we saw, however, his poetic version was not the first of its kind. The Spanish Juvencus,

²³ Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* [hereafter *De Gen. c. Manich.*], XXIII. 40, PL, 34, cols 192D–193A: 'et sicut in illo die pascitur homo et animalia, quae cum ipso sunt, herbis seminalibus et lignis fructiferis et herbis viridibus; sic ista aetate spiritualis homo quicumque bonus minister est christi, et eum bene quantum potest imitatur, cum ipso populo spiritualiter pascitur sanctorum scripturarum alimentis et lege divina: partim ad concipiendam fecunditatem rationum atque sermonum, tanquam herbis seminalibus; partim ad utilitatem morum conversationis humanae, tanquam lignis fructiferis; partim ad vigorem fidei, spei et charitatis in vitam aeternam, tanquam herbis viridibus, id est vigentibus, quae nullo aestu tribulationum possint arescere.'

²⁴ Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 195–200. Curtius notes that Sedulius (as well as other Christian poets) used Virgil's description of the Elysian fields for his description of Paradise in *Paschale carmen*, I. 53–57 (CSEL, 10, p. 200, n. 31). Augustine regarded Paradise as a figure of the Church: *Civ. dei*, XIII. 2, line 24, CCSL, 48, p. 404.

²⁵ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, pp. 294–95.

²⁶ Sedulius, *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 5, lines 12–13.

perhaps the first Christian poet, had written the first one a hundred years earlier, in the heady early years of the Christian Roman Empire, around 330, and its intended audience appears to have been recently converted Christians with a literary education who were put off by the Bible's unclassical style.²⁷ As already indicated, Juvencus's aim had been to make the message of the Gospels attractive by presenting it as an epic about what he calls the 'gesta vitalia' (life-giving deeds) of Christ; and in his preface he too defended his choice of subject by contrasting the Gospel's eternal truth with the 'mendacia' (lies) of the pagans' dearly beloved secular literature.²⁸ Basing his presentation mainly upon Matthew, he gave a considerably amplified and detailed narrative of the important moments in Christ's life and deeds, related thirty of his miracles, and devoted about half of his poem to Christ's verbal preaching. Epithets and imagery of light dominate: Christ, 'dominus lucis' (the Lord of light), has come to fill the world with light.²⁹ The account was couched in decorated poetical language resembling that of Rome's classical poets, especially Virgil,³⁰ and, as we saw, at the end of the poem Juvencus boldly stated: 'Christ's grace illumines me so greatly that the glory of the divine law willingly receives the earthly ornaments of language through our verses.'³¹ His stylistic devices and added poetic imagery throughout tended to speak to the affects, however, rather than point to specific Christian symbols.³² Thus although he sometimes added comments in his treatment of the Gospel episodes, he treated only the parables as overtly symbolical.³³ For him, miracles had simply been acts of power that authenticated Christ's authority and mission, not figures of invisible realities.³⁴

²⁷ On Juvencus, see now Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 1–134; on his intended audience: pp. 126–34. Useful earlier studies are *Restauration und Erneuerung*, ed. by Herzog and Schmidt, pp. 331–36; Kirsch, *Die lateinische Versepeik des 4. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 84–117; Kartschoke, *Bibeldichtung*, pp. 32–34; Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien*, pp. 67–80.

²⁸ Juvencus, *Evang.*, *Praefatio*, lines 19, 16, and 20, CSEL, 24, p. 2.

²⁹ Fontaine, 'Dominus lucis'; Röttger, *Studien zur Lichtmotivik bei Juvencus*.

³⁰ On these topics, see Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 84, 50–71, respectively.

³¹ Juvencus, *Evang.*, IV. 803–05, CSEL, 24, pp. 145–46: 'in tantum lucet mihi gratia Christi, | versibus ut nostris divinae gloria legis | ornamenta libens caperet terrestria linguae'.

³² Cf. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 127–28.

³³ Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 84–103.

³⁴ As in Juvencus, *Evang.*, II. 151–52, CSEL, 24, p. 48: 'His signis digne credendum discipulorum | Perpetuam stabili firmavit robore mentem'; 175–76, p. 49: 'sed signa videntes | Tum multi cepere fidem Sanctumque secuti'.

Sedulius, by contrast, rejects Juvenecus's ideal of decorated language and insists (although disingenuously) that his language will be plain and the poem therefore food for the soul only. And for him — although he does not always say so — everything that Christ does is a miracle.³⁵ In addition to seventeen Old Testament miracles, Sedulius relates thirty-six of the 'smaller' miracles in the Gospels. His treatment of these as revealing divine 'mysteries' reflects the influence of fourth-century patristic exegesis and perhaps of monastic meditational practices.³⁶ He appears to be primarily interested in images for meditation rather than in narrative, and follows the Gospel of John's interpretation of miracles as figures of salvation and sacrament;³⁷ the result is an absence of continuous narrative and a much reduced presentation of the Gospel material — now assumed to be completely familiar to the reader — in associatively cohering 'medallions' of selected parts.³⁸ Presented through successive images, then, the poem's content would be an invitation to collective meditative reflection and discussion if it were read, passage by passage, perhaps after the Gospel texts it refers to.³⁹ I would suggest that doing something like this may have been what Sedulius meant with the 'conversations of assiduous disputation' in Macedonius's group.⁴⁰

In addition to the poem, however, there is a subsequent version in prose, the *Paschale opus* (*Paschal Work*), written for the same addressee, at his request, with something like an apology: to supply information which had been omitted because of the constraints of poetic metre.⁴¹ Devoid of the poem's classicizing ornaments,⁴²

³⁵ Kirsch, *Laudes sanctorum*, p. 290, sees an echo here of Psalm 9. 2 (10. 1): 'narrabo omnia mirabilia tua'.

³⁶ See Auerbach, 'Figura'.

³⁷ Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 128–32; Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 24–32; and van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale book 4', pp. xiii–xvi.

³⁸ As Mazzega, *Sedulius, Carmen paschale, Buch III*, p. 37; Kirsch, *Laudes sanctorum*, p. 291. Cf. Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, p. 89.

³⁹ Augustine had pointed to a similar activity in his *Tract.*, XVIII. 11, lines 1–3, CCSL, 36, p. 187: 'Puto, fratres, quia cum loquimur ista et cum meditatur exercemus nos'. On *exercitatio animi*, cf. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, pp. 299–327; on the dialogues in Cassiciacum, esp. pp. 309–10; on the usefulness of the effort to understand a 'mystery', pp. 485–88.

⁴⁰ On early Christian meditational practices, see Hadot, 'Antike Methodik der geistigen Übungen im Frühchristentum'.

⁴¹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, CSEL, 10, pp. 171–303; two hymns of his also survive: CSEL, 10, pp. 155–68.

⁴² Cf., for instance, 'Domini[s] tonan[s]' (the Lord Thunderer) (an epithet of Jupiter) for Christ-God in Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 27, with 'omnipoten[s] Domini[us]' (the almighty

it here and there also gives the original Gospel text. Moreover it adds occasional verbal exhortations that urge acts of mutual love, support, and peace and stresses more extensively than the poetic version that God will certainly answer strenuous prayers of unshakeable faith⁴³ — seeming to point to a practice of praying for miracles in the group. The prose version will be adduced where it elucidates or amplifies the meaning in the poem.

Choosing miraculous transformations instead of verbal exhortations to communicate the essence of the Christian message is a bold move that — also — may reflect a personal experience. Sedulius's poem, although he nowhere actually spells this out, could well have been intended as a contrast-imitation to what were then still prime models of literature: Virgil's *Aeneid*, the epic about the hero who founded Rome, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a synthesis of the Greek myths presented through the transformations occurring in them.⁴⁴ Rome, however, had been plundered by the Visigoths in 410 — the realization that the Roman Empire was not eternal after all profoundly shocked the world. What relevance could the Greek gods' immoral capers and tricks have to contemporary problems? In Sedulius's epic, the hero now is not an Aeneas who needs divine help at every turn but the omnipotent Christ, restoring his eternal heavenly kingdom; and the transformations are not punishments or escapes from ethically doubtful situations but those of beneficent miracles. They are the Christian counterpart of the great deeds which an epic traditionally celebrates.⁴⁵

The poet's treatment of Christ's miracles as revelations that would open the heart's eyes to see God's otherwise unnoticed work of continuous creation again seems to point to a more than casual acquaintance with Augustine's writings, especially his commentary on the Gospel of John. As we saw, the introduction to his twenty-fourth homily, for instance, can be read as a model for Sedulius's approach to his material, speaking of something having been

placed before the senses [...] which is meant to elevate the spirit, and, presented to the eyes, [...] which is intended to exercise the intelligence, so that through his visible works we

Lord) in Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 1, CSEL, 10, p. 177, line 5. "Tonans" alone in *Paschale carmen* II. 205; V. 17 and 72.

⁴³ As for instance Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 27, CSEL, 10, p. 192, lines 11–14; II. 13, CSEL, 10, p. 214, line 3; III. 14, CSEL, 10, p. 244, lines 4–17; IV. 2, CSEL, 10, p. 257, lines 1–7; and IV. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 267, line 15 – p. 268, line 5.

⁴⁴ As also Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 210, 225; and Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, p. 65. See also van der Laan, 'Imitation créative'.

⁴⁵ Similarly Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, p. 80.

admire the invisible God, and [...] come to desire to see invisibly the one whom we know from visible things to be invisible.⁴⁶

Combining the focus upon transformational events as making visible the centre of the foundational Christian story with the appeal to the affects through 'poetic' imagery that is often at the same time religious symbolism is an appeal to the reader's imagistic consciousness — one in which associative and often transformational dream-dynamics dominate. The poetry of Sedulius's older contemporary, the poet-exegete Paulinus of Nola may have been a model here.⁴⁷ Paulinus, of course, had already advocated writing about the 'miracula summi vera dei' (true miracles of the highest God),⁴⁸ instead of about immoral pagan fictions, and had himself written about the contemporary miracles of Saint Felix.⁴⁹ I would suggest that Paulinus's passion for 'conceiving' images of 'divine laws' through the images that the Bible's descriptions bring forth in the meditating mind⁵⁰ also seems to be echoed in what looks like Sedulius's poetic meditations upon Christ's visible miracles yielding images that exhibit, and perhaps even induce intimations of, the Christian 'mysteries'. Sedulius's reference, in the somewhat amplified prose version, to the sweetness of *meditation* upon biblical texts⁵¹ appears to point to an intention to let his poetry too appeal to that state of mind: one that internalizes symbolic images as visualizations of affective-spiritual dynamics that do not have an affinity for language.⁵² As already indicated, scholars have noted that a parallel tendency towards imagistic thinking — with its non-discursive dynamics — becomes visible in various kinds of other sources and in art of this period.⁵³ It seems likely then that, as

⁴⁶ Augustine, *Tract.*, XXIV. 1, lines 21–25, CCSL, 36, p. 244: 'admotum est sensibus, quo erigetur mens, et exhibitum oculis ubi exerceretur intellectus, ut invisibilem Deum per visibilia opera miraremur, et [...] etiam ipsum invisibiliter videre cuperemus, quem de rebus visibilibus invisibilem nosceremus'. On Sedulius's knowledge of Christian exegesis, see Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 84–90; Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 226–44.

⁴⁷ See de Nie, 'Paulinus of Nola and the Image within the Image', pp. 261–89.

⁴⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, XXII. 29–30, CSEL 30, p. 187.

⁴⁹ Costanza, 'Da Giovenco a Sedulio', p. 264, makes this same comparison.

⁵⁰ De Nie, "'Divinos concipe sensus'".

⁵¹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 225, lines 10–11: 'haec meditatio nimium saturat et delectat tamquam mellis crassi dulcedo'. Cf. Psalms 1. 2 and 118 (119). 103.

⁵² As MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, has shown, however, a tendency towards imagistic thinking becomes noticeable in other kinds of sources in this period as well.

⁵³ See Dronke, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World*, pp. 5–24; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*; and Roberts, *Jeweled Style*, pp. 66–121.

Jacques Fontaine has suggested, Sedulius's poem was intended to be a spiritual exercise.⁵⁴

At the same time, the poet's choice of miracle as the explicit model for understanding the nature of Christian truth almost certainly also points to a more general shift of orientation and perception in contemporary Christian culture. After the apostolic period and still in Juvenius's time, as we saw, miracles had tended to occur, if at all, outside the public eye and to be downplayed by Christian leaders. One important reason for this was the competition with pagan miracles and magic, which had made the whole phenomenon difficult to assess and disputable.⁵⁵ As we saw, the situation changed dramatically with the sudden proliferation of 'public' miracles in the later fourth and early fifth centuries. The change gradually became institutionalized when, as the imperial government was increasingly unable to protect its western territories against the barbarian incursions, Ambrose's example of institutionalizing dead martyrs as protectors of his city inspired many minds and hearts to turn for protection to heavenly patrons. Sedulius's placing Christ's delegation of his miraculous powers to the disciples in the exact middle of each of the two books of his miracles seems to be a sure sign that he regarded the requesting and receiving of miracles to be a central fact of life in his own time.⁵⁶ The popular impact of this new phenomenon, then, is likely to bear a considerable amount of responsibility for the difference in focus between Juvenius's and Sedulius's presentations of the same Gospel material.

'Steps to the Paschal Gifts': The Biblical and Ecclesiastical Context

In the very first line of the prologue to the poem, it is introduced as a 'paschales [...] dapes' (Paschal meal).⁵⁷ The traditional fare of the Easter meal then being lamb, and this being a symbol of Christ,⁵⁸ all this might seem to be a more or less innocent metaphor — but as will be seen it is quite the opposite. The readers are then asked not to expect a work of bookish artifice (*opus [...] codicis artificis*), or to

⁵⁴ Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien*, pp. 248, 249–50.

⁵⁵ See on this and the following the Introduction and Chapter 1.

⁵⁶ As Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, p. 52.

⁵⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, *Praef.*, 1, CSEL, 10, p. 14.

⁵⁸ John 1. 29, 36; on *pascha* as the Jewish Easter lamb, see Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, p. 597.

expect 'to enjoy the shining meals of noble learned men',⁵⁹ which almost certainly refers to the exegetical works of the Church Fathers. Neither should his readers expect superb artistry or golden dishes containing all the edible things of the earth, a reference, no doubt, to the already-mentioned decorated style then current in literature. Instead, they are invited 'to come, content, to the ceremony of a sober meal, preferring to be nourished, through the soul rather than by food',⁶⁰ by vegetables served in earthenware dishes. The whole passage, of course, is a form of the conventional modesty topos.⁶¹ Remembering Sedulius's professed intention to charm and his many attested Virgilian borrowings,⁶² it sounds disingenuous; his intention, nevertheless, is to point the reader to the content rather than the beautiful form. The mention of vegetables may point to the sober diet of Macedonius's ascetic group or community which would have precluded eating lamb except as spiritual food. The image of the meal as 'Paschal', however, points to the Last Supper and its ecclesiastical continuation as the Eucharist. As will be seen, it is in fact a signpost to a vital underlying dimension of the poem that will become recognizable only much later and through a close reading of the text.

In the first lines of poem proper, the poet again fulminates against the depravity of secular literature. Having ridiculed the grandiloquent 'figmenta poetae' (poetic fictions) that ever renew the falsehoods of savage deeds and crimes, the poet asks why, used as he is to singing psalms about heavenly things, he should be silent about the 'clara salutiferi [...] miracula Christi' (shining miracles of the salvation-bringing Christ).⁶³ He says that 'speaking about the Thundering Lord delights my senses as well as my whole heart. For He gave my senses and my heart and is the One whom his creature should serve'.⁶⁴ Although the epithet points to the pagan god Jupiter, this does sound like a personal experience. Sedulius continues, however, by saying that this personal service is 'the way to salvation; it leads with firm

⁵⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 9, CSEL, 10, p. 15: 'nobilium nitidis doctorem vescere cenis'.

⁶⁰ Respectively, Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 5–6, CSEL, 10, p. 14: 'modicae contentus adi sollemnia mensae | Plusque libens animo quam satiari cibo', and Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 15–16, CSEL, 10, p. 15.

⁶¹ On the commonplaces of 'affected modesty' and of the exordium, see Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 83–89.

⁶² Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 71–84; Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 209–26.

⁶³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 17–25, CSEL, 10, pp. 16–17.

⁶⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 28–30, CSEL, 10, p. 17: 'Dominum[...] tonantem | Sensibus et toto delectet fateri: | Qui sensus et corda dedit, cui convenit uni | Facturam servire suam'.

steps to the Paschal gifts. And this will be my song: let everyone turn their attention to this'.⁶⁵ This is the first of the two times in the poem that the reader's attention is explicitly invited (the other being the already-quoted invitation to recognize the 'mysteries' in the miracles); guiding his 'steps' to the understanding and meriting of the 'Paschal gifts' of salvation, then, is the poem's stated purpose. The prose version looks ahead to what follows and reads: 'here we place the fundament of our work; let all turn their sick minds to this'.⁶⁶ The reader is evidently expected to know what the Paschal gifts are; they are specified only much later as the sacraments: Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist and the water of baptism.⁶⁷ New converts were baptized at Easter and then for the first time given access to the Eucharist. The poem, then, through its recounting of Christ's miracles as manifesting the 'mysteries' enacted in the sacraments, wants to show the way to understand and experience these. Perhaps the reader's meditational, affective experiences of the miracles about to be recounted were also understood as a kind of 'steps'.

When Sedulius then spells out what he means with 'salvation' in his comparison of the content of Greek 'doctrine' (stories about immoral gods) with that of the Bible, we see why minds are said to be 'sick'. Although as we saw Augustine also mentioned 'feverish', Sedulius's imagery may point to a personal experience:

Apply this work constantly to your wounded inner selves, you into whom the deadly illness and Attic doctrine of Cecropian poison, dedicated to empty concerns, has crept and follow, rather, the life-[giving] odour of the breathing [biblical] Law, leaving behind the filth of the Athenian country. Descendants of Theseus, what are you doing wandering in your labyrinthine cave and traversing the blind halls of Daedalus's house? Why do you up to now prefer the wild vine to the gentle grapes and, neglecting the roses, pick the wayside nard? Why venerate stone and bronze [statues], how will impious temples help you, why condemn your souls to [the worship of] mute metals? Stop living in squalid fields in dusty plains, barren regions, in which the arid soil does not know how to bring forth fruit. And do not pluck from the bloodstained earth poisonous plants, livid with deadly poison, damned to be Tartarean food. Rather, enter into the delightful glades of groves ever blossoming through divine fluids, the blessed abodes, where the seeds of [eternal] life sprout through divine waters and the sown fields, gladdened through the heavenly fount and their thorns

⁶⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, l. 35–37, CSEL, 10, pp. 17–18: 'via [...] salutis, | Haec firmos ad dona gradus paschalia ducit. | Haec mihi carmen erit: mentes huc vertite cuncti'.

⁶⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, l. 1, CSEL, 10, p. 177, lines 14–15: 'hic nostri ponemus operis fundamenta, huc igitur aegras cuncti mentes advertite'.

⁶⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, v. 290, CSEL, 10, p. 185: 'Corpus, sanguis aqua tria vitae munera nostrae'; similarly Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, v. 24, CSEL, 10, p. 293, lines 11–13.

taken away, are cleansed so that a harvest can grow for God and so that great barns can store the hundredfold fruit of the future reward.⁶⁸

This is a key passage. As will be seen, the image of the 'wounded' inner self permeates Sedulius's treatment of his theme: Christ's restoration of his creatures. The difference between Greek literature and biblical truth is that between a deadly poisonous emptiness and an eternal blossoming and fruiting. As in the Gospel, the harvest appears to be the sum of the good deeds that deserve a heavenly reward. The prose version of this passage in the *Paschal Work* yields added pointers to a burgeoning fruitfulness:

Leave behind, I beg you, now completely leave behind the filthy fields of sandy dust, the naked drought of barren fields, where the ploughlands never know how to bring forth a fruitful reward for the sweating farmer through its pregnant womb. [...] Rather, enter the beautiful fields of flowering grass and pleasant approaches to the blessed abode through moist streams of the pure Fount, where the fruitfulness of the seeds of life, quickened by the divine waters, nourishes the grain after the sharp growing weeds have been torn out, and through the exceeding bountifulness of multiple fruits there can already be a harvest for God, opening the hope of a future reward, and the greatest fruit multiplied a hundredfold is laid aside in the [heavenly] barns.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, l. 38–59, CSEL, 10, pp. 18–19: 'Hanc constanter opem laesis adhibete medullis, | Quos letale malum, quos vanis dedita curis | Attica Cecropii serpit doctrina veneni, | Sectantesque magis vitam spirantis odorem | Legis Athenaei paedorem linquite pagi. | Quid labyrintho, Thesidae, erratis in antro | Caecaque Daedalei lustratis limina tecti? | Labruscam placidis quid adhuc praeponitis uvis | Neglectisque rosis saliuncam sumitis agri? | Quid lapides atque aera coli, quid fana profana | Proderit et mutis animas damnare metallis? | Parcite pulverei squalentia iugera campi | Et steriles habitare plagas, ubi gignere fructum | Arida nescit humus, nec de tellure cruenta | Livida mortiferis vellatis toxica sucis, | Tartareo damnata cibo: sed amoena virecta | Florentum semper nemorum sedesque beatas | Per latices intrate pios, ubi semina vitae | Divinis animantur aquis et fonte superno | Laetificata seges spinis mundatur adeptis, | Ut messis queat esse Dei mercisque futurae | Maxima centenum cumulare per horrea fructum.' As I shall be doing throughout, in order to recognize the precise internal imagery, I render the meaning of the words as literally as possible, even if this makes for somewhat inelegant reading.

⁶⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, l. 1, CSEL, 10, p. 178, lines 8–11, 14–18, and p. 179, lines 1–2: 'Parcite, quaeso, iam parcite squalentibus harenosi pulveris glebis et sterilium nuda perfrui siccitate camporum, ubi numquam gravidis arva visceribus laborem sudantis agricolae fecunda norunt relevare mercede. [...] quin potius iucunda florei graminis prata et amoenos beatæ sedis accessus per liquidos puri fontis latices introite, ubi vitalium seminum divinis aquis animata fecunditas nutrit segetem revulsa sentium asperitate crescentium, quæ nimia frugis ubertate multiplicis Dei queat esse iam messis ac spem futurae mercis aperiens centenis cumulis fructum maxim[um] recondat in horrea.'

Virgil's image of Elysium, the abode of the blessed, is readily recognizable.⁷⁰ But Sedulius is overlaying and integrating it with the Christian image of Paradise (as in Revelation 22. 1–2). The concern with sterility may also echo that in Virgil's first *Georgic*.⁷¹ Is the poet pointing to Christ's new kingdom as a replacement for the now-failed one of Rome?

Although Sedulius does not say so here, the core of the 'fruitfulness' seems to inhere in what he calls the 'seeds of life'. In the Gospels' parable of the sower — which Sedulius (considering his emphasis, surprisingly) omits, as he omits almost all of the Gospels' verbal preaching — Christ identifies these seeds as 'the word of the Kingdom' or 'the word of God' (Matthew 13. 19 and Luke 8. 11, respectively). It is this seed, the Gospel says, that in the good 'soil' of a believing heart, 'brings forth fruit' a hundredfold (Matthew 13. 23); Luke omits the hundredfold and adds 'in patience' (Luke 8. 15). Sedulius's prose version indeed tells his readers that 'deeds', presumably good ones, are called 'fruit' in the Gospels, and the hundredfold harvest must be that of these good deeds.⁷² Juvenius had transmitted this parable at length as a verbal message;⁷³ what is Sedulius attempting to achieve by presenting it, as will be seen, only through miracles that exhibit it? Although not mentioned in this context in the Gospels, Sedulius here writes that it is 'the divine waters' and 'the heavenly Fount' that precipitate the sprouting of the seeds of life (cf. Revelation 22. 1); these almost certainly point to baptism and to the image of God as 'the fountain of life' in Psalm 35. 10 (36. 9), an image which was later transferred onto Christ.⁷⁴ Both images will be seen to return in Sedulius's descriptions of Christ's miracles.

After his initial invitation to the reader to choose fruitful life rather than sterile 'death', the poet addresses and praises Christ as the Creator God, who has now given to the human race, perishing because of its having eaten of the forbidden fruit in Paradise, a new food and a drink — understood to be the Eucharist — that expel the poison of the serpent that seduced them.⁷⁵ Furthermore,

You have created the human race [...] again from the same trunk, so that the mystical power would show that, through the aid of the wood [of the Cross], that which was killed

⁷⁰ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6. 638–39, cited by Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, p. 165; he also points (p. 164) to borrowings from Virgil's *Eclogues*, 5. 7 and 17.

⁷¹ Green, *Latin Gospels of the New Testament*, p. 165.

⁷² Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 230, line 5. Cf. Matthew 13. 8.

⁷³ Juvenius, *Evang.*, II. 738–54, CSEL, 24, pp. 74–75.

⁷⁴ See 'Fountain'.

⁷⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 60–72, CSEL, 10, pp. 20–21.

by the sins of the flesh could be renewed by the clear waters — for you washed the whole world in one baptism.⁷⁶

The prose version, again, supplies accents which had not found a place in the metric one. The Creator is there addressed as 'totum sacro nutu contines mundum' (contain[ing] the whole world through a holy guiding), and to have created the world by the powerful word (*poten[s] verb[um]*).⁷⁷ As will be seen, both notions are dominant shaping forces in the poem. The main point here, however, is that of the Creator's restoration of a vitiated creation. For this is above all what Christ's miracles bring about and exhibit. Thus, whereas Juvencus, alongside conspicuous light imagery, had consistently emphasized only Christ's rulership,⁷⁸ Sedulius, as will be seen, stresses especially his omnipotence and creatorship. This emphasis is not entirely original, however. Augustine's comments upon Christ's miracles in the Gospel of John, for instance, also do this, and at the same time relativize the importance of the miracles in the Gospels over against the much greater ongoing miracles performed by the Creator in nature.⁷⁹ Combining an emphasis upon Christ's creatorship with that upon miracles also appears earlier, if succinctly, in the poet Prudentius's ninth hymn.⁸⁰ This dimension would have distinguished these miracles effectively from contemporary pagan miracles and magic, regarded by Christians as effected by demons, as Sedulius also says.⁸¹

Still addressing Christ, the poet then hopes that he will guide him to his City of Salvation, specified in the prose version as Jerusalem, and illumine his way with the light of his word;⁸² this would enable him to arrive in the meadows (probably

⁷⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 73, 75–78, CSEL, 10, p. 21: 'Qui genus humanum [...] Una iterum de stirpe creas, ut mystica virtus, | Quod carnis delicta necant, hoc praesule ligno | Monstraret liquidas renovari posse per undas, | Totum namque lavans uno baptisate mundum'. This could be a pointer to Ambrose's notion that identified 'the flesh' with sex and regarded baptism as a putting on of Christ's immaculate body (as Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 349–50).

⁷⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 2, CSEL, 10, p. 179, lines 3–6.

⁷⁸ Juvencus, *Evang.*, II. 265, CSEL, 24, p. 53: 'mundi regnator'. Elsewhere, however, Juvencus also uses 'terrarum lumen' (II. 733, p. 74), 'doctor lucis' (III. 109, p. 83), and 'sator aeternae vitae' (III. 161, p. 85).

⁷⁹ As in Augustine, *Tract.*, VIII. 1 and IX. 1, CCL, 36, pp. 81–82, 90–91.

⁸⁰ Prudentius, *Cathemerinon*, IX, CCL, 126, pp. 47–52.

⁸¹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 246, lines 5–7 only; this reference is lacking in the poem.

⁸² Respectively, Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 2, CSEL, 10, p. 180, line 5, and Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 2, CSEL, 10, p. 180, lines 8–9; cf. Psalm 118 (119). 105.

visualized as flowering) where the Good Shepherd — also an important, recurring, image of Christ as Saviour — will enter the sheepfold with his flock.⁸³ The notion of ‘way’, connected with that of ‘steps’, also recurs in the poem.⁸⁴ Then Sedulius introduces another fundamental dynamic pattern. With Christ’s guidance, he writes, the narrow path to the heavenly city cannot be difficult for him to travel, for

all of nature is subjected to your orders, released from her customary course, *she turns, through your dominating command, into opposed figures*. If you command the harvest to ripen in the snow, the winter calls forth the harvester; if you wish the new wine to flow in the spring sun, the dripping cultivator will trample the grapes while the fields are in flower: all times will obey your divine words. Proof of this is the ancient faith and witness is the hoary past of the earliest fathers and, impossible to be destroyed by time, the signs of your deeds of power remain through the times.⁸⁵ (emphasis added)

This emphasis upon ‘opposed figures’ runs counter to Augustine’s regarding the whole creation with its hidden potentialities as a continuous miracle and of individual miracles as extensions of this. For Sedulius, explicitly or implicitly, *inversion* turns out to be the central dynamic in almost every event. Also sharply differing from Augustine, it suggests a concomitant inversion of consciousness, from common-sense to non-common-sense experience, such as that of images during meditation and of a sacrament. The poet’s implicit message here is to expect everywhere Christ’s miraculous inversions, exemplified by transformations into a normally impossible ‘fruitfulness’. Like Galmiche and unlike Augustine, then, Sedulius appears to be focused upon the creative moments themselves of transformation into the spiritual sphere. In this way he attempts to induce a simultaneous *non-verbal experiencing* or non-discursive understanding of these moments as representing, as well as accessing, the overall pattern of the faith.

Christ’s deeds of power through the times are then specified as the miracles in the Old Testament, which Sedulius — in contrast to Juvenecus, who begins with Christ’s birth — thereupon briefly relates. They are presented as performed, not

⁸³ Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 100–09, sees the Shepherd theme as the key to the meaning of the poem as a whole. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 78–84, CSEL, 10, pp. 21–22.

⁸⁴ Green, *Latin Gospels of the New Testament*, p. 164; Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, p. 106.

⁸⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 85–95, CSEL, 10, p. 22: ‘subditur omnis | Imperiis natura tuis, ritumque soluto | Transit in adversas iussu dominante figuras. | Si iubeas mediis segetes arere pruinis, | Messorum producit hiems; si currere mustum | Vernali sub sole velis, florentibus arvis | Sordidus inpressas calcabit vinitor uvas: | Cunctaque divinis parebunt tempora dictis. | Indicio est antiqua fides et cana priorum | Testis origo patrum, nullisque abolenda per aevum | Temporibus constant virtutum signa tuarum’.

by the Father, but by Christ as the eternal cosmic Creator.⁸⁶ In the poem, most of them are not explicitly brought into connection with the future salvational patterns, but in some way resemble them; the reader is evidently expected to make the connection himself. The prose version gives somewhat more guidance on this point. Thus, prefiguring Christ's and Mary's ascensions, Enoch is said to have made nature lose her course by living longer and to have surprised death by being lifted into heaven. Unfortunately, Sarah, in her late conception and bearing of Isaac, is pictured extremely unkindly instead of as a glorious prefiguration of the Virgin.⁸⁷ For all his ecstatic praise of spiritual fertility, Sedulius obviously has a visceral hatred of woman's natural physical sexuality and fertility; one suspects that it once attracted him too much. Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son, on the other hand, is praised: in the prose version as 'grande [...] mysterium' (a great mystery).⁸⁸ The ram's sacrifice 'taught what was to come: that through Christ's blood, the holy Lamb would die for the human race'.⁸⁹ Lot's wife's turning back to look at Sodom and being turned into a pillar of salt is presented as a just punishment, because those who have withdrawn from the dangers of the contemptible world and look back cannot be saved.⁹⁰ Remarks such as this one, and Sedulius's generally not very positive attitude towards women — Eve is later said to be just as guilty as the serpent!⁹¹ — make one suspect that he had himself withdrawn from secular life.

The burning bush is simply described; its foreshadowing the flames of the Holy Spirit above the apostles is probably assumed to be self-evident.⁹² The serpent that Moses's rod turned into is picturesquely described, but Moses himself is not mentioned.⁹³ Nor does he appear in the story of the opening of the Red Sea (Exodus 14. 21–29); Christ is the actor here too:

nature changed her course, the people walking through the middle of the sea in a way already showed forth baptism. Christ was their leader, for Scripture says: 'the voice of the

⁸⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 103–219, CSEL, 10, pp. 23–32.

⁸⁷ Genesis 21. 1–7. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 107–13, CSEL, 10, p. 24.

⁸⁸ Genesis 22. 1–14. Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 5, CSEL, 10, p. 182, lines 8–9.

⁸⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 119–20, CSEL, 10, p. 24: 'ventura docet, quod sanguine Christi | Humana pro gente pius occumberet agnus'.

⁹⁰ Genesis 19. 26. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 121–26, CSEL, 10, p. 25.

⁹¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 9–10, CSEL, 10, p. 44; a particularly grating example of the same attitude is his detailed and graphic description of women mutilating themselves when Herod had their sons killed (Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 10, CSEL, 10, p. 210, lines 14–19).

⁹² Acts 2. 2–4. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 127–31, CSEL, 10, p. 25.

⁹³ Exodus 7. 8–13. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 132–35, CSEL, 10, p. 25.

Lord is above many waters' [cf. Psalm 28 (29). 3] and 'voice', finally, is 'Word'. Christ the [divine] Word was present, who, ruling over the two agreeing Testaments of the old and new law, opened the old abyss so that the doctrine that followed would proceed in straightened ways.⁹⁴

The prose version speaks of the event as an early version of the mystery of baptism.⁹⁵ These visible events, then, are thought to announce and make visible future spiritual ones. The sacraments are then also prefigured in the desert: angels brought the 'caelest[us] pan[is]' (heavenly bread), and the army drew water from a dry rock;⁹⁶ Sedulius sums up: 'Christus erat panis, Christus petra, Christus in undis' (Christ was the bread, the rock, and in the water).⁹⁷ The prose version adds a dynamic detail: that the water gushed forth; and it speaks of the water, bread, and rock as 'nuntians sacramenta mysterii' (announc[ing] the pledges of the mystery)⁹⁸ — the later 'sacraments'.

Next, Balaam's talking donkey is referred to; its owner is not mentioned.⁹⁹ Then comes the sun's standing still near Gibeon until the battle was won with heavenly help (Joshua 10. 12–13). The reader is expected to know that Joshua was in command, for the poet continues: 'already then the obedient stars [fore]saw the coming of Jesus through the name preceding him'.¹⁰⁰ Elijah's being fed by a raven, a reference to his miracles, and his being taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot follow.¹⁰¹ The reader's recognition of the resemblance to Christ's miracles and his ascension is taken for granted. The prophet's name, resembling that of the sun, is said to reflect all this.¹⁰² In this, and perhaps in the story of the battle of Gibeon, Sedulius appears to be taking the symbolism of Christ as 'sol iustitiae' (the sun of

⁹⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 141–47, CSEL, 10, p. 26: 'Mutavit natura viam, mediumque per aequor | Ingrediens populus rude iam baptismata gerebat, | Cui dux Christus erat, clamat nam lectio: "multas | Vox Domini super extat aquas"; "vox" denique "verbum" est. | Verbum Christus adest, geminae qui consona legis | Testamenta regens veterem patefecit abyssum | Ut doctrina sequens planis incederet arvis'.

⁹⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 9, CSEL, 10, p. 183, lines 18–19.

⁹⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 148, CSEL, 10, p. 26. Exodus 16. 13–15, 17. 6.

⁹⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 159, CSEL, 10, p. 27.

⁹⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 11, CSEL, 10, p. 184, lines 16, 19–20.

⁹⁹ Numbers 22. 21–30. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 160–62, CSEL, 10, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 168–69, CSEL, 10, p. 28: 'iam tunc famulata videbant | Sidera venturum praemisso nomine Iesum'.

¹⁰¹ (IV) II Kings 2. 11. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 170–83, CSEL, 10, pp. 28–29.

¹⁰² Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 184–87, CSEL, 10, p. 29.

righteousness, Malachi. 4. 2) to be self-evident. The life of an unnamed king, in the prose version identified as Hezekiah, is lengthened;¹⁰³ and Jonah's three-day stay in the sea monster is simply mentioned, taking for granted the reader's knowledge of it as a figure of Christ's future stay in hell.¹⁰⁴

The three young men in the oven are said to have extinguished the fire with that of their faith: 'burning only with the ardour of the imagination of their heart, they overcame the fire of their punishment through the fire of their soul'.¹⁰⁵ The poet makes it into a figure: likewise, he says, 'the flame of the oven [of Hell] is extinguished by the flames of an ardent faith'.¹⁰⁶ The tyrant (Nebuchadnezzar) who ordered the crime was punished by being turned into a cow.¹⁰⁷ And the lions with whom Daniel was enclosed fawned upon him instead of eating him.¹⁰⁸ Thus, in contrast to Juvenecus's beginning his story with the birth of Christ, Sedulius locates this birth in the larger context of Christ's continuing role in history, from Creation and man's expulsion from Paradise to the possibility of his readmittance. The section on the Old Testament miracles is concluded by a rhetorical question:

Tell me, o Nature, after such [events], where are your laws? Who robbed you so often of your laws? [A short resumé follows of the miracles just recounted.] Truly, it was the Creator, whose word is the moving force in whatever things are seen and not seen; his whole work obeys his command and follows wherever his decision, through a nod, indicates.¹⁰⁹

Christ, then, continues to *act through his word* within his creation, reversing its laws when he pleases. A tirade follows against the foolishness therefore of those who worship created things instead of their Creator.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 188–91, CSEL, 10, pp. 29–30; Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 15, CSEL, 10, p. 186, line 7. Cf. IV (II) Kings 20. 1–7.

¹⁰⁴ Jonah 2. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 192–97, CSEL, 10, p. 30. Cf. Matthew 12. 39–40.

¹⁰⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 202–04, CSEL, 10, pp. 30–31: 'tantumque ardore calentes | Cordis imaginæ vincunt incendia poenæ | Igne animi'. Cf. Daniel 3. 8–30.

¹⁰⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 204–05, CSEL, 10, p. 31: 'flammis | Ardentis fidei restincta est flamma camini'.

¹⁰⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 206–11, CSEL, 10, p. 31. Cf. Daniel 4. 1–33.

¹⁰⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 212–19, CSEL, 10, pp. 31–32. Cf. Daniel 6. 6–23.

¹⁰⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 220–21, 238–41, CSEL, 10, pp. 32–33: 'Dic, ubi sunt, natura, tuæ post talia leges? | Qui totiens tibi iura tulit? [...] Nempe creatori, cuius quaecumque videntur | Seu quaecumque latent et rerum machina sermo est, | Omne suum famulatur opus sequiturque iubentis | Imperium quacumque trahit sententia nutu.'

¹¹⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 242–75, CSEL, 10, pp. 33–36.

The poet then gives his readers another image of the heavenly city to hasten towards: it is the citadel of our liberty, shining with its golden-domed royal palace, where the those who ask are given and the now crowning once-rejected Stone offers a miracle to the eyes.¹¹¹ The prose version adds that it is the home of tranquil peace and the safe dwelling of salvation — perhaps a reference to the insecurity caused by the Germanic invasions.¹¹² The heavenly city is explicitly said to take the place of the now not-so-eternal city of Rome towards which Virgil's epic had pointed:

For if the poet of secular letters prophesies about the earthly city of the mortal kingdom and founded by a mortal founder: 'And what was the great occasion of your seeing Rome? Liberty [...]', how much greater is this [liberty] in the city of the heavenly kingdom, which the Lord God founded as Creator, whose laws we believe to be those of perpetual liberty, about which the prophet speaks in songs such as: 'the Lord, building Jerusalem'.¹¹³

After a diatribe against the Arian and Sabellian heresies' wrong views of Christ, the heavenly city is then again described as a shining fortress with a banner of the Cross flying on top of its wall, trumpets sounding, and Christian soldiers standing ready to be admitted through the door, which is Christ.¹¹⁴ And the poet prays to Christ, 'who wished to bring back to life a world lying in death', to grant — perhaps as a reward for his writing the poem — his wish to enter and live in this eternal city.¹¹⁵ Finally, after pointing — as will be seen, significantly — to the analogy of the structure of the Christian doctrine to the structure of the world, by relating the four evangelists to the four seasons and the twelve apostles to the months and the hours,¹¹⁶ the poet states that he will now

¹¹¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 282–89, CSEL, 10, p. 37.

¹¹² Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 27, CSEL, 10, p. 191, lines 8–9. In his letter to Macedonius Sedulius refers to one of the members of his group having lived under barbarian occupation (Sedulius, *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 7, lines 6–7).

¹¹³ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 27, CSEL, 10, p. 191, lines 10–18: 'si enim de terrena mortalis regni civitate et a mortali fabricatore fundata poeta saecularium ita cecinit litterarum: "Et quae tanta fuit Romam tibi causa videndi? Libertas" [...], quanto magis caelestium in civitate regnorum, quam Deus Dominus instituit fabricator, iura perpetuae libertatis esse credamus, de qua vates ait talium canticorum: "aedificans Hierusalem Dominus".' Cf. Isaiah 65. 18; Psalm 146 (147). 12–13.

¹¹⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 336–40, CSEL, 10, p. 40. Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 30, CSEL, 10, p. 194, line 19 – p. 195, line 14, is similar. On Christ as the 'door', cf. John 10. 9.

¹¹⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 346–48, 351–52, CSEL, 10, p. 41: 'qui mundum in morte iacentem | Vivificare volens'.

¹¹⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 359–63, CSEL, 10, p. 42.

hasten from remembering the beginning of the ancient death to the new life and, sowing tears, will harvest eternal joys: for we who weep in Adam, sowing seeds, shall soon all exult in carrying our sheaves when Christ comes.¹¹⁷

The 'seeds' in tears may have been thought of as feelings of contrition, the humbling or compunction of the heart, that make it capable of transformation into a new life of 'fruitfulness'.¹¹⁸ More than a century later, however, the poet Venantius Fortunatus, when describing the cure of a blind old woman by a living bishop at which he was present, writes that she saw 'ministris compunctione deflentibus' (the bystanders weeping with compunction) at the miracle.¹¹⁹ Is Sedulius perhaps also thinking of a similar reaction by his readers to the miracles recounted by his words in the poem — themselves perhaps also spiritual 'seeds'? Poetic images are not constrained by one-dimensional, horizontal logic.

The Miracles as Figures: 'The Image of Death' and its Transformations

The second book — according to the poet's own calculation, the first book of the miracles — tells the story of Christ's birth and youth up to the call of the disciples. And, in contrast to Juvencus's heavily decorated but substantially minimal rendering of the Lord's Prayer,¹²⁰ book two ends with the poem's longest section of explicit spiritual instruction in its detailed explanation of this prayer; in the prose version the original text precedes the explanation. Certain crucial passages in it will be discussed later. The book begins, however, with the first explicit reference to the necessity for human salvation by mentioning that the 'most savage serpent' had lured Eve into sin and thereby condemned humankind to be subject to death.¹²¹ There would have been no hope for mankind, the poet continues,

if the loving Sower, ready to forgive crimes and slow to punish them, out of compassion and mercy had not repaired his work, lest his creature perish and lest the living image, resembling God, standing before him would become unlike him through death.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 364–68, CSEL, 10, p. 42: 'veteris reCOLens exordia mortis | Ad vitam properabo novam lacrimasque serendo | Gaudia longa metam: nam qui deflemus in Adam | Semina mittentes, mox exultabimus omnes | Portantes nostros Christo veniente maniplos'.

¹¹⁸ See Adnès, 'Pénitence', and Adnès, 'Larmes'.

¹¹⁹ Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita sancti Germani*, 113, line 12, MGH AA, 4. 2, p. 20.

¹²⁰ Juvencus, *Evang.*, I. 590–600, CSEL, 24, p. 32.

¹²¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 1–10, CSEL, 10, p. 44.

¹²² Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 20–24, CSEL, 10, pp. 45–46: 'Ni pius ille sator culpas ignoscere promptus, | Reddere difficilis, sua ne factura periret | Quaeque Deo similis vivens adstaret

This is another key passage.¹²³ Sedulius simply assumes that his readers are familiar with Genesis's story of the creation of man 'according to the image of God', and with the apostle Paul's statement 'as we bore the image of the man of earth, so we shall bear the image of the heavenly one'.¹²⁴ Further down, he specifies the 'repair' as a more dynamic 'rebirth', saying: 'so that since prior nature lay vitiated under the dominion of death, through Christ's being born, man was able to be reborn and to lay down the stain of the old flesh'.¹²⁵ But nature's laws too, then, were vitiated by the consequences of original sin. Perhaps with this in mind, the prose version speaks elsewhere of 'pertinax natura' (obstinate nature),¹²⁶ perhaps obliquely meaning 'human nature'. As Sedulius presents it, the 'Sower' — presumably, of 'life' — Christ-God repairs his creature through an ongoing series of divinely operated visible transformations, being rebirths: from 'the image of death', the disordered, incapacitating, and above all 'sterile' state of original sin of which all illness is a figure, back to the image of fecund, eternal 'life', a resembling of the image of God. Augustine had specified this image in mankind as an interior one:

Where is the image of God? In the mind, in the intelligence. [...] the Light of men is the Light of their minds. The Light of minds is above these minds, and transcends all minds. It is that Life by whom all things were made.¹²⁷

The Christ — as the image of God — which we find depicted in Sedulius's poem, however, cannot be imitated in human living. For he is the all-powerful Creator,

imago | Dissimilis de morte foret, veniale misertus | Instauraret opus'. Augustine had also pointed to refashioning by the Creator himself in his *Tract.*, I. 12, CCSL, 36, pp. 6–7.

¹²³ Cf. Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 1, CSEL, 10, p. 198, lines 11–12: 'ne [...] imago quae ad similitudinem Dei facta fuerat vivens dissimilis haberetur ex morte' (lest the image which had been made according to the likeness of God, [although] living, would be unlike [Him] through its being subject to death).

¹²⁴ Genesis 1. 27; 1 Corinthians 15. 49: 'sicut portavimus imaginem terreni portemus et imaginem caelestis'.

¹²⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 32–34, CSEL, 10, p. 46: 'Ut quoniam natura prior vitata iacebat | Sub dicione necis, Christo nascente renasci | Possit homo et veteris maculam deponere carnis'. 'Salvator' recurs in Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 155, and III. 136, CSEL, 10, pp. 54 and 74, respectively.

¹²⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 20, CSEL, 10, p. 188, line 4.

¹²⁷ Augustine, *Tract.*, III. 4, lines 26–27, 29–31, CCSL, 36, p. 22: 'Ubi imago Dei? In mente, in intellectu. [...] Lux hominum est lux mentium. Lux mentium supra mentes est, et excedit omnes mentes. Hoc erat vita illa per quam facta sunt omnia.'

divine Word, and Ruler of the world.¹²⁸ In addition, his first epithet in the poem, 'salutifer' (Bringer of salvation) through his miracles,¹²⁹ is obviously central; it is closely related to that of 'the good Shepherd'.¹³⁰ Another frequent image of Christ, however, is as the divine Light.¹³¹ Apart from these epithets, however, the notion of Christ as the divine Light — so important in Juvencus — remains more or less implicit, as will be seen, even in the cures of the blind.

What kind of image of God, then, might Sedulius have had in mind that mankind could resemble? Remembering that 'death' would make man unlike his Maker, the image of 'life' must be the one pointed to. We have already seen that Sedulius images eternal 'life' as an eternal sprouting, blossoming, and fruiting. Christ, however, as the apostle Paul had said, is 'life, and the light was the life of men' (John 1. 4). What we see Sedulius saying, therefore, is that Christ is, and effects, this happy fecundity.

In Sedulius's comment upon Christ's first temptation, we see this dimension highlighted; it does not appear in the original Gospel passage. When Christ refuses to make a stone into bread, Sedulius not only reiterates Christ's answer that the word of God is his food but exclaims: 'as though he does not always perform these miracles — he who, bringing to life the stony innards of the earth, fecundates the fruit-bearing ear and creates bread from stone!'.¹³² The prose version, significantly, puts even more emphasis upon this fecundating dynamic, stating:

¹²⁸ Creator: 'genitor rerum' (Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 13, CSEL, 10, p. 92); in the prose version: 'humani sator ille principii mundique conditor atque perfector operis sui fabricam' (Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 20, CSEL, 10, p. 270, lines 1–2); divine Word: Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 145 and 312; III. 196; V. 19, respectively CSEL, 10, pp. 26, 38, 78, 115. In the prose version: Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 30, CSEL, 10, p. 195, line 3, and III. 16, CSEL, 10, p. 245, line 16; Ruler of the world: 'dominus mundi' (Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 196), and 'rerum dominator' (Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, V. 209; respectively CSEL, 10, pp. 78 and 129); in the prose version: 'rerum providus gubernator' (Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 2, CSEL, 10, p. 256, lines 9–10).

¹²⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 26, CSEL, 10, p. 17.

¹³⁰ As for instance in Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 83, and V. 220, CSEL, 10, pp. 22 and 130, respectively.

¹³¹ As for instance in 'lucis via' and 'auctor lucis' (twice), respectively Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 279; III. 113–14; and V. 151, CSEL, 10, pp. 62, 73, 125.

¹³² Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 180–83, CSEL, 10, p. 56: 'miracula tamquam | Haec eadem non semper agat, qui saxea terrae | Viscera frugiferis animans fecundat aristis | Et panem de caute creat'. The comment resembles that of Augustine upon the feeding of the five thousand in *Tract.*, XXIV. 1, lines 11–13, CCSL, 36, p. 244.

as though he would not be able to do this, who, always doing such a work, brings forth the pregnant ear from the frugal nourishment by the stony innards of the earth, and through a growing nourishment in the full ears of the harvests from rocks grants the abundant food of bread from stones through [his granting of] fecundity.¹³³

This emphasis upon Christ's fecundation of the world will reappear most strongly in what Sedulius later says about his body on the Cross. Remembering the poet's appeal to the reader in the introduction to the book, he may also be pointing to Christ's fecundizing presence in the individual as engendering that of thoughts and deeds pleasing to God;¹³⁴ as the apostle Paul had written, then it would be 'no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Galatians 2. 20).

In the explanation of the Lord's Prayer which concludes the second book, Christ is further praised as 'semita pacis' (the path of peace), a notion that recurs in Sedulius's rendering of the crucifixion.¹³⁵ Inner and relational peace, then, could reflect the image of Christ and of God. Fecundity, as such, is not mentioned here. The very last lines of book two, however, refer to the 'liberty' — from oppression by the Evil One — and (eternal) life in Christ's heavenly 'meadows', almost certainly implying that they are the flowering ones mentioned earlier.¹³⁶ The prose version makes this into a spiritual quality, speaking of 'being granted to enjoy an already secure life in the sweetest meadows of Christ through the most delightful pleasure of blossoming'.¹³⁷ But it also makes the underlying theme of spiritual fecundity explicit. After having said that Christ liberates man from oppression by the Evil One, who kills, Sedulius explains:

For in him [i.e. Christ] — through his good fruits — is the Tree of Life, and in him [the Evil One], through the bad deeds, is the root of the ancient sin. For the Gospel declares that deeds are to be understood as 'fruit', when the Lord, opening the various minds of diverse people, commands them to be known through their fruits, that is through their works, saying: 'by their fruits you shall know them'.¹³⁸

¹³³ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 14, CSEL, 10, p. 215, lines 12–16: 'quasi non posset hoc facere, qui tale iugiter opus exercens de saxeis terrae visceribus producit segetem frugali victu praegnantem et spicea messium densitate cautis nutrimento crescente panis uberem cibum de lapidum fecunditate largitur'. Cf. Matthew 4. 1–4.

¹³⁴ Cf. Augustine, *De Gen. c. Manich.*, XXIII. 40, PL, 34, cols 192D–193A.

¹³⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 279; V. 184, CSEL, 10, pp. 62, 128, respectively.

¹³⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 299, 300, CSEL, 10, p. 64.

¹³⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 230, lines 18–19: 'suavissima Christi per pascua largi floris amoenitate gratissima vitam carpere iam securam'.

¹³⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 230, lines 1–6: 'In hoc enim per bonos fructus arbor est vitae, in illo per malos radix praevaricationis antiquae. Actus namque "fructus" intellegi

The reference is, of course, to Christ's injunction to the disciples at the Last Supper, and the image of Christ as the Tree of Life presupposes his spiritual presence in them as producing the 'fruits' or good works, ostensibly including their performance of miracles. The image returns at the end of the poem. As is well known, the cosmic tree is a root symbol of the connection between heaven and earth that occurs in many cultures.¹³⁹ Ambrose, Augustine, and some other patristic writers also identified Christ as the Tree of Life.¹⁴⁰ In the Bible, as a real tree it appears only in Genesis and Revelation: access to it in Paradise is denied after the first sin; in the heavenly city and garden it bears fruit every month and the saved may eat of its healing leaves (Genesis 2. 9, 3. 22–24; Revelation 22. 1–2). As an image, the tree appears in Proverbs' saying that 'fructus iusti lignum vitae' (the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life).¹⁴¹ Would the image of Christ as the continually burgeoning Tree of Life, then, be for Sedulius an essential part of the divine image which restored man would again come to reflect and resemble? Before exploring this image, however, a few of the various dynamics in human illness will be considered that make visible the spiritual state that is 'the image of death', and how this was transformed by Christ.¹⁴²

'A Living Corpse': Immobilization

'The image of death' is explicitly applied to the condition of the paralysed man in Nazareth. Expanding considerably upon the original story, in which the man himself is not described, Sedulius makes the scene come alive:

Behold, four men were there, carrying on their necks a living man who was already a corpse, scarcely still a man, lying on a pallet, whose remaining life without the use of his body was the image of death; his weak members, deprived of their use, lay limp and through his powerless limbs, his sinews having been paralysed, feeble muscles held together his inert body parts. When the Lord saw this man, deprived of the strength of his powers, he first cleansed him by remitting the sins which had generated the increase of the evils, and said

evangelica lectio declaravit, ubi Dominus varias diversorum mentes aperiens ex suis quemque fructibus id est ex operibus iussit agnoscere, dicens: "ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos" [Matthew 7. 16].

¹³⁹ Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, pp. 44–47.

¹⁴⁰ See Klauser, 'Baum des Lebens'.

¹⁴¹ See 'Tree of Life'. Cf. Proverbs 11. 30.

¹⁴² Useful treatments of miracles of healing in the New Testament are Wilkinson, *Health and Healing*, and Howard, *Disease and Healing in the New Testament*.

to the unhappy man lying there: 'Arise, take your pallet upon your own shoulders and go to your home'.¹⁴³

The prose version, as often, is clearer:

he [Christ] first took care to absolve him from his sins, which are the roots of all evil, so that in the cleansed man, the filth of sins having been expelled, health entered into an as it were prepared home.¹⁴⁴

The presence and criticism of the Pharisees and the question of authority are omitted. The 'image of death' gives the event the aura of a resuscitation — and the inversion of an existing condition — and 'salus' almost certainly means not only health but, figuratively, salvation, while 'home' could also point to heaven. The extensive description of the man's limp state also appears to point back to Isaiah 40. 29, where Isaiah had prophesied about the divine Shepherd, an image of Christ that as we saw recurs in Sedulius's poem, that 'He [the Lord] gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength'. In this story, then, the disease of total incapacitation or 'the image of death' is said to be 'generated' by sins, which need to be forgiven before healing can take place. The cure is a clear figure of man's liberation from sin and death through Christ.

Sedulius refers to the same chapter of Isaiah at the beginning of book four when he qualifies a general report of many cures with the statement:

Nothing therefore of what those trusting/hoping in him [asked for] was ever difficult to give for the highest God, for whom it is said to be easy to smoothen the rugged and straighten the crooked [ways]; and whatever nature denies, he performs on his own authority.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 89–99, CSEL, 10, p. 71: 'Ecce aderant vivum portantes iamque cadaver | Bis bina cervice viri lectoque cubantem | Vix hominem, cui vita manens sine corporis usu | Mortis imago fuit, resolutaque membra iacebant | Officiis deserta suis, fluxosque per artus | Languida dimissis pendebant vincula nervis. | Hunc ubi virtutum Dominus conspexit egentem | Robore, peccatis primum mundavit adeptis, | Quae generant augmenta malis miseroque iacenti: | Surge, ait, et proprium scapulis adtolle grabatum, | Inque tuam discede domum.' As he does elsewhere, Sedulius combines details from the different versions in the synoptic Gospels: Matthew 9. 1–8; Mark 2. 1–12; Luke 5. 18–26. See Mazzega, *Sedulius, Carmen paschale, Buch III*, pp. 125–33.

¹⁴⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 8, CSEL, 10, p. 238, lines 14–17: 'a peccatis prius curavit absolvere, quae malorum omnium sunt radices, ut in hominem depulso sordium squalore mundatum tamquam praeparatam sibi salus introiret in domum'.

¹⁴⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 5–8, CSEL, 10, p. 91: 'Nil igitur summo de se sperantibus umquam | Difficile est conferre Deo, cui prona facultas | Ardua planare et curva in directa referre; | Et quidquid natura negat se iudice praestat.'

The emphasis, again, is upon the breaking-through of an obstinate 'nature' — debilitated by human sin — that, as will be seen below, stands for the human subject as well. And this agrees with what we saw to be Augustine's view that man needs grace to be able to turn to God. The reference is now to Isaiah 40. 4, announcing the coming of the Lord to grant his salvation in a general sense, as it is quoted in Luke 3. 4–6. Sedulius interprets this as including cures. For when Isaiah thus announced the coming of Christ, he continues, he was not speaking of his straightening rocky surfaces or winding paths, but of his healing the human race. The poet then adds a spiritual explanation of the meaning of Isaiah's urging his listeners to make straight a way for the Lord (as in Isaiah 40. 3):

this way being the way of thoughts and the paths of the will, by which the Lord proceeds when he rightly enters the dwelling of a pure heart. Thoughts, namely, and the will are the paths along which works [come into being], and which appear to precede all effects, whether good or bad. Whatever, therefore, nature's force cannot do, comes most easily to the divine power.¹⁴⁶

Sedulius goes on to speak of storing a 'treasure' of good deeds in heaven by feeding the hungry and thirsty, giving hospitality to travellers, comforting prisoners, taking care of the sick, and generously ministering to all the poor who could be Christ in disguise.¹⁴⁷ God, then, makes straight or purifies the ways of the heart by which he enters and along which all works come into being — something which 'nature', here meaning man's state of original sin, cannot accomplish. He needs to be entered by an infinite love that ends the immobilization by undoing all the affective spasms and knots inside. All good works, then — implicitly, 'fruitfulness' — would be effected through God's dwelling in one's purified heart as in a temple, as Sedulius elsewhere says.¹⁴⁸

In descriptions of other cures, the image of an immobilization resembling that of death recurs. In the case of the withered hand, Christ's command itself heals. Although Sedulius tells us that the event took place in the synagogue, the fact of its being the Sabbath and the Pharisees' criticism on account of this are not mentioned. Matthew relates that, after defending his right to heal on the Sabbath, Jesus asked

¹⁴⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 1, CSEL, 10, p. 256, lines 1–6: 'Viam scilicet cogitationum et semitas voluntatem, qua Dominus ad mundi cordis habitaculum recto gradiatur ingressu. Cogitationes etenim et voluntates viae sunt operum, quae bonum cuiuspiam sive malum praecedere videntur effectum. Quicquid ergo vis denegat naturalis, divinae facillimum subiacet potestati.'

¹⁴⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 2, CSEL, 10, p. 256, line 16 – p. 257, line 10. It is part of the Sermon on the Mount. Cf. Matthew 6. 19–21.

¹⁴⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, V, CSEL, 10, p. 136, line 292.

the man to stretch out his hand and that when he did so it was restored. Sedulius, however, again paints a timeless scene in which the image of death dominates:

he saw an invalid, lame in [part of] his body, half-dead in [one of] his members, not fully alive, whose withered right hand condemned that part of his body to hang limp. Healing by a command, [Christ] ordered the cold hand to warm up and to be led back in a divine manner to health — as he always did, taking away nothing and giving everything.¹⁴⁹

In the prose version, however, Sedulius combines the image of death with that of woundedness, saying that Christ ‘saw an invalid powerless because of the limpness of a part of his body, half-dead because of his wounded members’.¹⁵⁰ He quotes Christ’s words from the original and appears to defend the command against being magic:

Then, with the aid of a command, he powerfully brought back to life the hand whose nerves had given up by movements of blood of the veins into another warmth; he did not perform it by art but granted it by commanding.¹⁵¹

Here a withered hand alone presents what appears to be a somewhat frightening image of death. Sedulius is interested only in what he regards as the essence of the cure: a transformation from the image of death to that of life. But, elsewhere, by healing a blind man, Christ also ‘took away the appearance as though of death’.¹⁵² And the distended stomach of a man with dropsy is said to have been ‘about to give birth to an internal murder’;¹⁵³ Christ, however, as ‘mundi pater’ (the world’s Father), commanded ‘pestis lymphata’ (the watery disease), evidently understood to be a spiritual evil, to depart.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 183–88, CSEL, 10, pp. 77–78: ‘Aspicit invalidum, dimenso corpore mancum, | Seminecem membris, non totum vivere, cuius | Arida torpentem damnaret dextera partem; | Imperioque medens gelidam recalescere palmam | Praecipit et reduci divino more saluti, | Sicut semper agit, nil tollit et omnia reddit.’ Cf. Matthew 12. 9–14. On this passage, see Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 173–78.

¹⁵⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 5, CSEL, 10, p. 244, lines 18–20: ‘cernit invalidum stupore dimensi corporis mancum, membris seminecem sauciatis’.

¹⁵¹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 15, CSEL, 10, p. 245, lines 2–4: ‘Tunc imperioso potenter auxilio palmam nervis cessantibus alienam in calorem sanguinis venarum motibus animari non arte prestitit, sed iubendo concessit.’ Cf. Matthew 12. 22–23.

¹⁵² Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 108, CSEL, 10, p. 98: ‘ademit speciem simulatae mortis’; cf. Luke 14. 1–6. Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 10, CSEL, 10, p. 261, line 19 – p. 262, line 1, is similar: ‘specie[s] ilico simulatae mortis’. See van der Laan, ‘Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4’, pp. 82–84.

¹⁵³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 177, CSEL, 10, p. 103: ‘inclusam paritura necem’; Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 15, CSEL, 10, p. 265, line 9 – p. 266, line 7, is similar: ‘ne[x] [...] inclusa’. See van der Laan, ‘Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4’, pp. 115–23.

¹⁵⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 181, 188, CSEL, 10, pp. 103, 104, respectively.

'Extinguished Faces': Blindness

The cures of blindness as an 'image of death' occur according to various dynamic models. The first story of two blind men begins with their cries to Christ:

'Son of the excellent David, expel the nocturnal darkness from our extinguished faces and grant us the light of day!'

How safe it is to believe, how healthy to recognize God! [For] they who sensed [the presence of] the Way of light already saw with their heart. Then [as though] olive oil had been poured upon the blind eyes of the petitioners as though these were smouldering fire glowing beneath the Lord's hand, they were restored by his bright touch, their faces shone bright with their lamps.¹⁵⁵

Believe and — through this — recognize God: as will be seen, this too is one of Sedulius's central messages to the reader. To 'recognize' anything, however, there must already be an image in the memory with which to identify a new perception. With his imaged descriptions of Christ's miracles, Sedulius is supplying these images. And again the reader is invited to visualize Christ's hand — as we saw, a central concept for Paulinus too. Olive oil and smouldering fire do not appear in the original story, in which there is mention only of touching. Although olive oil was the standard fuel for lamps in this period, Sedulius's mention of it could also point — obliquely — to the custom of anointing the sick as found in the letter of James.¹⁵⁶ However, oil can also stand for divine grace.¹⁵⁷ The light imagery visualizes the event's spiritual dimension: Christ as 'the Way of light' lighting these men's eyes as though they were indeed lamps which had been all but extinguished. This underlying thought in this passage can be understood as an adaptation of Augustine's saying that Christ is the light of human eyes, which do not have light in themselves: 'the servants of God remain good lamps through the oil of his compassion, not through their own forces. For the free grace of God is the oil of these

¹⁵⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 144–51, CSEL, 10, p. 75: "Fili inclite David, | Decute nocturnas extinctis vultibus umbras | Et clarum largire diem!" Quam credere tutum, | Quam sanum est cognosse Deum! Iam corde videbant | Qui lucis sensere viam; tunc caeca precantum | Lumina defuso ceu torpens ignis olivo | Sub Domini micuere manu, tactuque sereno | Instaurata suis radiarunt ora lucernis.' Cf. Matthew 9. 27–31. See Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 151–58.

¹⁵⁶ See Wilkinson, *Health and Healing*, pp. 143–58, and Howard, *Disease and Healing in the New Testament*, pp. 258–66.

¹⁵⁷ As Sedulius himself says in the dedicatory epistle (Sedulius, *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 4, line 2); cf. Eucherius of Lyon, *Formulae spiritalis intellegentiae*, VII, line 752, CCSL, 66, p. 47: 'oleum, misericordia vel Spiritus sanctus'.

lamps'.¹⁵⁸ The images which Sedulius adds to the story, then, function as guides for the readers to 'see' spiritual reality, like the blind men, with 'the eyes of the heart' — in other words, with what might be designated as the 'divinatory' imagination.¹⁵⁹

In book four, another cure of two blind men is described. Here, sleep is an additional model:

The Lord saw two blind men sitting together as he passed through a certain road accompanied by a crowd. They filled the wandering breezes with their feeble voices calling for the gift [of light] for their extinguished faces. Not in the habit of delaying in the conferring of health where he felt [the fire of] faith to be burning, the Holy One, at once touching their eyes, commanded them to wake up — the eyes which a huge sleep had oppressed. Thus opening the long-closed windows under their eyebrows, he made the night to go away with the entering of the daylight.¹⁶⁰

Blindness is again not a cognitive disability, for the men are already seeing with the eyes of the heart. This trustful sensing is visualized as a fiery faith — an image that recurs in later hagiography and may derive from reports of luminous phenomena observed around desert monks.¹⁶¹ Here, Christ does not light what was thought of as the (ethereal) fire in their eyes;¹⁶² instead, he is said to drive away the oppressive 'sleep' and open their 'windows' — significantly, again with the touch of his hand. As for the image of sleep, the notion 'sleep as though of death', occurring elsewhere,¹⁶³ may reverberate here. 'Night' is, of course, a parallel symbol of evil and death, and 'day' or 'daylight' of Christ as the spiritual illumination of man.¹⁶⁴

In the case of the trembling, hunchbacked woman who is also blind, Sedulius again points explicitly to Christ's performing an inversion. When she is healed,

¹⁵⁸ Augustine, *Tract.*, XXII. 10, lines 19–20, CCSL, 36, pp. 228–29: 'Permanserunt enim servi Dei lucernae bonae ex oleo misericordiae illius, non viribus suis. Gratia quippe Dei gratuita, illa oleum lucernarum est'.

¹⁵⁹ See de Nie, 'Seeing and Believing in the Early Middle Ages'.

¹⁶⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 31–39, CSEL, 10, p. 93: 'geminos Dominus considerare caecos | Dum quoddam transiret iter comitante caterva | Conspicit, extinctae poscentes munera formae | Flebilibusque vagas implentes vocibus auras. | Nec cunctata solens pietas inferre salutem, | Quae sentit flagare fidem, mox lumina tangens | Evigilare iubet, quae somnus presserat ingens, | Atque diu clausas reserans sub fronte fenestras | Ingreddente die fecit discedere noctem.' Cf. Matthew 20. 29–34. See van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 23–31.

¹⁶¹ Daniélou, 'Feuersäule (Lichtsäule, Wolkensäule)'; Veuthey, 'Illumination'.

¹⁶² See Miles, 'Vision', pp. 124–29.

¹⁶³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 108, CSEL, 10, p. 98.

¹⁶⁴ Hahn, 'Darkness, Night'; Hahn, 'Light, Shine, Lamp'.

she finally saw the sky and the stars and recognized the burning orb of the sun, seeing all of this as she [now] stood erect: for those whom the evil Enemy oppresses seek the depths and those whom Christ nourishes rise up again without impairment.¹⁶⁵

In this case, the Devil, and not debilitated 'nature', is explicitly said to be responsible, and Christ overcomes the blindness and depressing curvature by a 'nourishing' — a pointer to the Eucharist? But the beneficent fire of the sun, now finally seen, is also an image of Christ. As presented, the event is at the same time an image of the illumination resulting from Christ's salvation as well as a transparent pointer to the final resurrection. But only for those who are already familiar with these core notions. Whereas Juvenius intended to give the full information, also for those thinking about converting, Sedulius addresses the knowledgeable, if not also the already initiated, compressing multiple meanings and associations into a medallion image that, if affectively re-enacted, can effect an analogously patterned interior transformation.

Sedulius's rendering of the cure of the man born blind, which Juvenius's version omits, appears to sum up what he has been saying in these cures: it also contains the already quoted only other explicit instruction to the reader. The original story, that Christ put mud and spittle on the man's eyes and instructed him to wash them in the holy pool of Shiloh, is found only in John's Gospel (John 9. 1–41). There, its symbolic meaning appears to be encapsulated in Christ's telling the disciples that the man was not blind because of his or his parents' sin, but 'that the works of God might be made manifest in him' (John 9. 3). This 'work' is the fact that Christ, 'the Light of the world', came into the world 'so that those who do not see may see' this divine truth (John 9. 5 and 9. 39, respectively). Seeing, in all its dimensions, is there the core meaning.

In Sedulius's version, this image is subordinated to the larger one of Christ's salvational incarnation. The focus here is not upon Christ as Light but as the *Creator* who, brought forth in a human covering by a virgin, repairs his human creature, blinded through Eve's ancient crime. Although elsewhere designating Christ as 'the Creator of light',¹⁶⁶ Sedulius here significantly adverts to him only as Creator. And he tells us that

travelling from there, [Christ] saw a seated man born blind, who had fallen from the deficient womb of his mother into a daylight without light. Thereupon the Creator of

¹⁶⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 203–06, CSEL, 10, p. 79: 'caelumque ac sidera tandem | Cernit et ardentem solis reminiscitur orbem, | Totum erecta videns: quia quos malus opprimit hostis | Ima petunt, quos Christus alit sine labe resurgunt'. Cf. Luke 13. 10–17. See Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 186–92.

¹⁶⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 113–14, CSEL, 10, p. 73: 'auctor lucis'.

human blood and the source of the world-coming-into-being, not suffering to let the imperfect organs be any longer deprived of their proper use, smeared the man's natal mud upon the closed holes in his cheeks, and repaired him from the ancient seed. However, he did not receive his vision before, obeying the command of the Lord, he had gone to the pool of Shiloh and, safe through the brotherly remedy of the mud, he had washed his eyes with pure water. At once his twin eyes shone in his face and at last deserved to see the daylight that had been unknown to them.

Let all perceive what mysteries miracles may teach our souls. We are the blind descendants of the wretched Eve's womb, bearing inborn darkness through an ancient sin. But since God deigned to take on the mortal form of the human covering, salvational earth was made for us from the Virgin, which when washed off by sacred springs, opens the bright breathing-holes of light being reborn.¹⁶⁷

The 'mystery' that this miracle makes visible, then, is that of Christ's re-creation of the whole man through enlightening him, now re-enacted in baptism. Sedulius may have read this same interpretation, however, in a more elaborated form in Augustine's homilies on the Gospel of John, in which this is referred to as 'a great mystery'.¹⁶⁸ Its message is perhaps also adumbrated in Sedulius's rendering of the cure of another blind man, who is said to have exhibited 'the appearance as though of death' and was also healed through spittle.¹⁶⁹

'As It Were Re-created': Resuscitation

A cure, then, may be understood as a liberation from constriction by an evil spirit and/or a resuscitation or rebirth from an immobilization resembling that of death

¹⁶⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 251–70, CSEL, 10, pp. 108–09: 'Inde means genitum cernit considerare caecum, | Qui male praegnantis dilapsus ventre parentis | In lucem sine luce ruit. Tunc sanguinis ille | Conditor humani mundique orientis origo, | Imperfecta diu proprii non passus haberi | Membra operis, natale lutum per claustra genarum | Inliniens hominem veteri de semine supplet. | Nec visum tamen ante capit, quam voce iubentis | Accepta Domini Siloam venisset ad undam | Et consanguinei tutus medicamine limi | Pura oculos fovisset aqua. Mox ergo gemellae | Vultibus effulgent acies tandemque merentur | Ignotum spectare diem. Cognoscite cuncti, | Mystica quid doceant animos miracula nostros. | Caeca sumus proles miserae de fetibus Evae, | Portantes longo natas errore tenebras. | Sed dignante Deo mortalem sumere formam | Tegminis humani, facta est ex virgine nobis | Terra salutaris, quae fontibus abluta sacris | Clara renascentis reserat spiramina lucis.' See van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 164–75.

¹⁶⁸ Augustine, *Tract.*, XLIV. 2, lines 1–14, CCSL, 36, p. 382. Van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 165–66, points to similarities with Prudentius, *Apotheosis*, lines 675–703, CCSL, 126, pp. 100–01.

¹⁶⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 108, CSEL, 10, p. 98. Cf. Matthew 9. 23–25. See van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 82–84.

— both figures of the fallen human state. How does Sedulius handle Christ's actual resuscitations? In the first resurrection narrative, that of Jairus's daughter, Sedulius again stresses inversion. The poet tells us that the desolate father beseeched Christ to 'pour back into her body her soul that has dropped out', and 'auctor lucis' (the Creator of light) prepared to go to her house.¹⁷⁰ After he had cured the woman with the blood flow on the way (which will be discussed below), he — now referred to as 'salvator' (the Saviour)¹⁷¹ — arrived at the house and told everyone that the girl was only sleeping:

He warmed her corpse, bound by icy death, with the fire of his spirit, and revived the motionless body through his word, making her who was born once live twice. Their minds stunned, her parents saw their wishes unexpectedly [granted] and, inverting their [mourning] manners, wept with joy.¹⁷²

The prose version has:

Then, by releasing the immobile corpse, already icy cold and bound by the cold rigour of death, through the fire of his spirit, he brought back the girl from hell by the will of his commanding voice.¹⁷³

Although Matthew, the only one to report this event, mentions only that he took the girl by the hand,¹⁷⁴ Sedulius here lets Christ's command and 'the fire of his spirit' revive her cold, immobilized body. The resurrection of the dead youth at Nain is reported as it is in Luke 7. 11–15, but the crowd's reaction of fear is omitted. It also refers to 'gelidum cadaver' (an icy corpse); Christ here gives 'auxilium vitale'

¹⁷⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 112 and III. 13–14, CSEL, 10, p. 72: 'lapsamque animam per membra refunde'.

¹⁷¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 136, CSEL, 10, p. 74.

¹⁷² Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 138–42, CSEL, 10, pp. 74–75: '[G]elida constrictum morte cadaver | Spiritus igne fovet, verboque immobile corpus | Suscitatur atque semel genitam bis vivere praestat. | Obst[u]puere animis, inopinaque vota parentes | Aspiciunt versisque modis per gaudia plangunt.' See Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 146–51.

¹⁷³ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 11, CSEL, 10, p. 241, lines 18–20: 'tunc cadaver immobile corpusque iam gelidum et frigidae mortis rigore constrictum spiritus igne remolliens imperiosae vocis arbitrio virginem suscitavit a tartaro'.

¹⁷⁴ Matthew 9. 25. Juvencus gives Christ the epithet *leti victor vitaeque repertor* and mentions his taking the girl's hand as well as a verbal command to rise (*Evang.*, II. 405 and 406–07, respectively, CSEL, 24, p. 60).

(life-giving aid) by touching the bier and commanding him to arise.¹⁷⁵ The prose version is similar.¹⁷⁶ Juvencus does not report this event.

Lazarus's resuscitation is the last miracle story in book four. In his version, Juvencus emphasizes the role of belief and of the miracle as proof of Christ's mission.¹⁷⁷ Sedulius — following the Evangelist John, the only one to tell this story — now spells out the full symbolic value of this kind of event. As John tells it, Christ deliberately delayed coming to Lazarus so that he would have been dead for several days and his resurrection would be 'for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it'.¹⁷⁸ Sedulius refers to Christ as 'omnipotens' (the Almighty) and says that he wept for the dead man, not as God but as a man.¹⁷⁹ Then, following John's Gospel, he lets Christ reproach Martha and Mary for their unbelief and sorrow; as though they are present, the poet adds a reproach of his own:

'Do you doubt that Christ can call one man back from the infernal caves: he who will let innumerable multitudes arise after their burials?'

Thus when the trumpet of the speaking Lord sounded, saying: 'Lazarus, come out!', Tartarus, shaken by a great fear, broke open, the cavern of Erebus opened and the lethal chaos trembled, the law of death in the deep perished, and suddenly his soul was seen with his own body: before their eyes stood a living corpse. And as it were re-created after his funeral ceremony, he died to himself and was a child born after his death and his own heir.¹⁸⁰

In the prose version, Sedulius adds the mention of the event's purpose to 'show the glory of his majesty as God';¹⁸¹ Christ's words to Lazarus are here 'as by a wondrous order of the commanding word', and he is 'tamquam denuo fuerit editus et creatus'

¹⁷⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 128, 133, 134, CSEL, 10, pp. 99–100. See van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 90–98.

¹⁷⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 12, CSEL, 10, p. 263, lines 1–17.

¹⁷⁷ Juvencus, *Evang.*, IV. 381–83, 389, 400, CSEL, 24, p. 128.

¹⁷⁸ The full story is in John 11. 1–44; this passage is verse 4.

¹⁷⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 276–77, CSEL, 10, p. 110.

¹⁸⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 280–90, CSEL, 10, pp. 110–11: 'Christum dubitatis, an unum | Possit ab infernis hominem revocare cavernis, | Qui dabit innumeras post funera surgere turbas? | Ergo ubi clamantis Domini sonuit tuba dicens | "Lazare, perge foras": magno concussa pavore | Tartara dissiliunt, herebi patuere recessus, | Et tremuit letale chaos, mortisque profundae | Lex perit, atque anima proprias repente medullas | Cernitur ante oculos vivens adstare cadaver. | Postque sepulchralem tamquam recreatus honorem | Ipse sibi moriens et postumus extat et haeres.' See van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 175–88.

¹⁸¹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 21, CSEL, 10, p. 271, line 5: 'ostendit gloriam suae maiestatis ut Deus'.

(brought forth/born and created anew, as it were).¹⁸² This, then, is how the future general resurrection should be visualized: as though a new creation. Characteristically, Sedulius presents in images what John’s Gospel had presented as a statement made by Christ to Martha before the event: ‘I am the resurrection and the life and he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live’ (John 11. 25).

‘The Wounded Body’: An Image of the Sinful Self

In a number of stories the image of death is not made explicit or coalesces with that of the wounded body — as already indicated, an image of the sinful self.¹⁸³ Thus the leper, covered with sores, called out to Christ:

‘If you wish, Lord,’ he said, ‘you can cleanse me from these blemishes.’ When Christ said, ‘I do wish it’, at once his whole skin returned and his members happily changed their temporary [horrible] appearance into their own beauty. And — stronger still — the man, now [appearing with] his own colour, was hardly recognized [by others].¹⁸⁴

In the prose version, the leper is further described as ‘stained with various infelicities and made even more wretched by a filthy whiteness’.¹⁸⁵ After the faith manifested by his request is praised and the cure effected — by touch as well as word here — the poet adds that the man’s body ‘left behind the horror of the blemished skin and the body lacked its temporary filthiness’ and speaks of him as ‘already presenting his healthy appearance or rather his true image’.¹⁸⁶ Presumably, the ‘true image’ here is the beautiful one resembling the image of God. More than

¹⁸² Respectively, Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 21, CSEL, 10, p. 271, lines 9–10: ‘ut imperiosae vocis iussu mirabili’, and *ibid.*, line 16.

¹⁸³ There are different representations of the suffering body in this period; see Perkins, *The Suffering Self*.

¹⁸⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 28–32, CSEL, 10, pp. 66–67: “Si vis, Domine”, inquit, “ab istis | Me maculis mundare potes”. “Volo”, Christus ut inquit, | Confestim redit una cutis proprioque decore | Laeta peregrinam mutarunt membra figuram, | Inque suo magis est vix agnitus ille colore.’ See Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 85–91.

¹⁸⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 3, CSEL, 10, p. 233, lines 15–16: ‘varia [...] infelicitate perfusus et obsceno factus candore miserior’.

¹⁸⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 3, CSEL, 10, p. 234, lines 5–6, 7–8: ‘ponens[que] maculosaeque cutis horrorem peregrina corpus caruit foeditate’, ‘sanam[que] proferens iam figuram vera magis in specie’.

a hundred and fifty years later, the poet Venantius Fortunatus was to use the leper image for himself as a sinner needing divine cleansing.¹⁸⁷

The wounds are wholly spiritual when the sinful woman who anointed Christ at his dinner with one of the Pharisees is said to have been 'bitten' and 'wounded' by her sins.¹⁸⁸ The prose version has 'multis delictorum vulneribus sauciata' (injured by the many wounds of her sins).¹⁸⁹ Christ tells her that her faith has saved her, and the poet explains the event as a model of penitence:

Great is the remedy of confessing that which hurts when concealed, for whoever hides his wounds nourishes them and fears to bare his affliction to curing. Behold, polluted for a long time, she departed cleansed in a short time because of her sighing, and washing herself in the lake of her own weeping, she returned purified by her tears and wiped clean by her hair.¹⁹⁰

The prose version is in essence the same but adds that sins that remain hidden lead to death.¹⁹¹ Sins, then, are not only wounds but also a source of 'pollution', as in the case of the leper, and lead to death. Significantly, the woman's physical gestures towards Christ are said to have effected her own spiritual cleansing — an inversion, again — so that Christ could forgive her. Enacting symbolic forms, then, actualizes their transformational spiritual content. This is one of the rare instances of preaching in the poem that is not related to a miracle in the usual sense of the word. What Sedulius shows his readers is in fact faith enacting the sacrament of penitence that opens the way to Christ's miracle of saving mankind.

Presenting Christ's cures as liberations that are inversions, re-creations, and rebirths from 'the image of death', then, is Sedulius's own powerful addition to the Gospel text. These rebirths are seen to take place through Christ's verbal command or his touch, and they may also involve the forgiveness of sins, exorcism, the application of spittle and mud, and washing. All of these in some way prefigure Christ's healing of man from the 'wounds' of sin and the death they entail and the granting of the gift of eternal life, through a rebirth or re-creation that restores man's

¹⁸⁷ Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita sancti Martini*, II, lines 483–87, ed. and trans. by Quesnel, pp. 49–50.

¹⁸⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 66–67, CSEL, 10, p. 95: 'plurima vitae | Mordebant delicta suae'.

¹⁸⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 7, CSEL, 10, p. 259, lines 15–16.

¹⁹⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 76–81, CSEL, 10, p. 96: 'Magna est medicina fateri | Quod nocet abscondi, quoniam sua vulnera nutrit | Qui tegit et plagam trepidat nudare medenti. | En polluta diu, modicum purgata recessit | Per gemitum propriique lavans in gurgite fletus, | Munda suis lacrimis redit et detera capillis.' See van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 44–62.

¹⁹¹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 7, CSEL, 10, p. 260, lines 4–5.

primeval spiritual state. The Gospel cures, then, announce, figure, and point to what the Church now enacted as Christ's sacraments: baptism and penitence. Through meditating upon the images of rescue from 'death' through rebirth or re-creation in these stories, the fifth-century reader could imaginatively re-enact them as the patterns of his own rebirth or re-creation.

This experience, however, would also imprint upon him the dynamic pattern of Christ's healing of a physical cure.¹⁹² Sedulius attributes the miracles to a combination of faith — which would open the way in the subject — and the often inversional effect of Christ's creative power. In the last book, however, the poet will show the greatest inversion: Christ's turning the wounds inflicted upon him before and during his crucifixion into healing for mankind.

The Miracles as Figures: 'The Living Image, Resembling God'

Does Sedulius also somehow visualize 'the image of God' which the restored and reborn would again resemble? Not as such. It is a fair assumption that his audience would be well aware of the notion that Christ is the Image of God (as in I Corinthians 11. 7; II Corinthians 4. 4; Colossians 1. 15), something he does not say explicitly. Instead, he presents Christ *as* God.¹⁹³ As already indicated, the Christ presented in the poem is not one that, in its totality, man could ever hope to resemble. He is the serene all-powerful Saviour, a miracle worker rather than an ethical teacher, continually transcending the human condition and bringing restoration and peace.¹⁹⁴ And 'death' being what makes the human being dissimilar to God, it must be the restoration of the quality of eternal 'life' that makes him similar again. Christ, as Light, is the 'life' of men (John 1. 4); how do Christ's other miracles — as the 'Sower' of eternal life as we saw Sedulius significantly calling him in this context¹⁹⁵ — manifest the dynamic patterns of this 'life'?

¹⁹² On this kind of conditioning as 'producing' a subject's 'reality', see Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', p. 122.

¹⁹³ 'Deus' in Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 16 and 322, and v. 310, CSEL, 10, pp. 66, 89, 137, respectively; 'omnipotens' in Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 23 and IV. 21, CSEL, 10, p. 249, line 9, and p. 271, lines 2–3, respectively.

¹⁹⁴ Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 39–48, 106, connects this with the theological controversies of the period.

¹⁹⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 20–24, CSEL, 10, pp. 45–46.

'What Was Said Being Received with Faith': 'Conception' through the Word

For Sedulius, Mary's virgin conception of and giving birth to Christ must have been the core model of all miracles, for what does it exhibit if not — as Ambrose also insisted¹⁹⁶ — the mystery of divinely initiated 'fruitfulness'? Although Sedulius nowhere says so, its Old Testament near-antecedent is, of course, Sarah's miraculous old-age conception of Isaac (Genesis 21. 1–2), whose being the prototype of the sacrifice of God's son appears to be taken for granted. Here is how the poet describes Sarah's case, however:

The wounded entrails of the aged Sarah were withering, consumed by the deterioration of age, and the cold blood dying in her body refused her a child, when, notwithstanding her aged husband, the midriff of her icy womb swelled into a new birth, and the trembling mother burdened in her cold womb, bore the hope of a fruitful nation and held her late-born son to her breast.¹⁹⁷

Six references in one sentence to the aged lady's cold, deteriorating entrails and an unnecessary reference to an — after all these images, no doubt visualized as withered — breast make rather grating reading. It can also be understood, however, as an image of the unregenerate human condition in general. Mary gets the opposite treatment. God-Christ wished to restore his creature so that the deiform image which it bore would not be destroyed by death;¹⁹⁸ therefore 'the holy Mary' is praised as the gentle rose growing above the sharp thorns¹⁹⁹ — the latter, presumably, also pointing indirectly to Eve.

The long passage describing the conception and birth of Christ leaves out place, time, and particulars; the focus is upon the universality of what is happening. As the prophets had foretold,

an angel, having hastened to the unblemished Mary, prophesied, and what was said being received with faith, the young woman's womb soon swelled with a starry burden: the Creator of the world came under the law of birth. The unwed virgin was astounded at her swollen womb and rejoiced to be about to give birth to the one who was her Father.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 341–65, esp. pp. 345 and 351.

¹⁹⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 107–13, CSEL, 10, p. 24: 'Saucia iam vetulae marcebant viscera Sarrae | Grandaevio consumpta situ, prolemque negabat | Frigidus annoso moriens in corpore sanguis; | Cum seniore viro gelidi praecordia ventris | In partum tumuere novum tremebundaque mater | Algentes onerata sinus, spem gentis opimae | Edidit et serum suspendit ad ubera natum.'

¹⁹⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 20–27, CSEL, 10, pp. 45–46.

¹⁹⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 28, CSEL, 10, p. 46.

²⁰⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 36–40, CSEL, 10, pp. 46–47: 'Angelus intactae cecinit propeperata Mariae: | Et dictum comitata fides, utrumque puellae | Sidereum mox implet onus,

The prose version contains added pointers to fecundity:

at once the breathed conception of the faithful word remained in the womb of the believing girl and the starry offspring concealed itself under the law of birth, that granted all to his decision to be born. The virgin's womb swelled and her untouched body was astounded at the fecundity of its inner parts.²⁰¹

In Mary's believing soul, then, the breathed speaking of the divine word of promise — and perhaps also the divine 'seed' in the word — precipitates the conception of Christ. Juvenius's longer description of this cardinal event in Christian history had spoken of 'virtus celsa Dei' (the sublime power of God) surrounding and overshadowing her, and ostensibly attributed the agency to 'the pure Spirit' which would 'command her with chaste words to bring forth a magnificent boy for the people'.²⁰² Sedulius's presentation of the manner of Christ's birth develops the pattern of his conception. At the beginning of the tenth month,

the holy day shone bright upon which, with the Virgin's birth-giving, the Word made flesh fulfilled its promised work of wishing to live among us. Then the greatest Infant, keeping the entrails of his temple undefiled, left it in a non-injurious way; this [manner of] birth proves [Mary's] virginity: [the Child] entering a closed space and leaving a closed space.²⁰³

Abstinence from sexual activity here transforms what in Sarah were 'defiled' entrails into a 'temple' sheltering, as the poet says later, 'the King who rules heaven and earth forever'.²⁰⁴ And the Virgin birth is chastely envisioned with an allusion to Christ's post-mortem entering through the closed doors of a room in which his

rerumque creator | Nascendi sub lege fuit. Stupet innuba tensos | Virgo sinus gaudetque suum paritura parentem.' Cf. Matthew 1. 18–25; Luke 1. 26–38, 2. 1–20. Augustine points to the same paradox in his *Tract.*, v. 4, lines 12–13, CCSL, 36. p. 43.

²⁰¹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 3, CSEL, 10, p. 199, lines 6–10: 'Mox puellae credentis in utero fidelis verbi mansit adspirata conceptio prolesque siderea nascendi sub lege delituit, quae cuncta suo nasci nutu concessit. Tumbant virginis sinus, et fecunditatem suorum viscerum corpus mirabatur intactum.' Augustine also mentions a miraculous added fecundity in his treatment of this event in *Sermo* 184. 1, PL, 38, col. 996: 'felicior atque mirabilior fecunditate addita, integritate non perdita'.

²⁰² Juvenius, *Evang.*, I. 68, 69, 70–71, CSEL, 24, p. 6: 'puerum casto sermone iubebit | Magnificum gigni populis'.

²⁰³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 42–47, CSEL, 10, p. 47: 'Fulgebat sacrata dies, cum virgine feta | Promissum conplevit opus: "verbum caro factum", | In nobis habitare volens. Tunc maximus infans | Intemerata sui conservans viscera templi | Inlaesum vacuavit iter: pro virgine testis | Partus adest, clausa ingrediens et clausa relinquens.' Ambrose, one of the first to propound Mary's perpetual virginity, had also stressed this (Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 354–55).

²⁰⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 63–64, CSEL, 10, p. 48: 'regem, | Qui caelum terramque tenet per saecula'.

disciples were gathered (John 20. 26). But Sedulius also gives us another, overlapping, image, for he continues:

What a brilliance was there, when Christ came forth from Mary's womb with a new splendour; [it was] like that of the exulting Bridegroom coming out of his beautiful bedroom, more beautiful than the sons of men.²⁰⁵

Augustine had pointed to the same image.²⁰⁶ Further down, the poet praises Mary as unique among women: 'Sola sine exemplo placuisti femina Christo' (You alone as a woman pleased Christ).²⁰⁷ Since he mentioned the third-century Alexandrian exegete Origen in his introductory letter to the prose version,²⁰⁸ Sedulius must have been somewhat acquainted with his writings; he may have found the just-mentioned images in Jerome's translation of the Alexandrian's commentary on the Song of Songs, in which Mary is extolled as Christ's bride as well as his mother. With his allegorical interpretation to Song of Songs 2. 3 ('As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow (*In umbra eius concupivi et sedi*), and his fruit was sweet in my throat'), Origen associates this shadow with the 'overshadowing' by the Deity that made Mary conceive Christ (cf. Luke 1. 35). He makes the event a model of what can happen in every believer, saying: 'Christ's birth took its beginning from the shadow: not only in Mary did his birth take its beginning from the shadow, however, but also in you, if you be worthy, will God's Speaking [i.e. Christ] be born'.²⁰⁹ Here, then, Christ as the heavenly Bridegroom of the soul — a notion then current in contemporary ascetic circles²¹⁰ — is conceived through the Holy Spirit in language about him reaching the heart that is enclosed in opaque flesh. Elsewhere Origen connects this with another kind of spiritual generation when he paraphrases Isaiah 26. 18:

'From your Word, Lord, I conceived in my womb and gave birth'. [...] Truly happy, therefore, is the fecundity of the soul when her union with the Word of God will have taken place and she has responded to his embraces. From this, a noble progeny will be born: from

²⁰⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 49–52, CSEL, 10, p. 47: 'Quis fuit ille nitor, Mariae cum Christus ab alvo | Processit splendore novo, velut ipse decoro | Sponsus ovans thalamo, forma speciosus amoena | Prae filiis hominum.'

²⁰⁶ Augustine, *Tract.*, VIII. 4, lines 20–25, CCL, 36, p. 84.

²⁰⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 69, CSEL, 10, p. 49.

²⁰⁸ Sedulius, *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 172, line 12.

²⁰⁹ Jerome, *Interpretatio homiliarum duarum Origenis in Canticum Canticorum*, II, PL, 23, col. 1136A: 'Nativitas Christi ab umbra sumpsit exordium: non solum in Maria ab umbra eius nativitas coepit, sed et in te, si dignus fueris, nascitur sermo Dei'.

²¹⁰ See Mellinato, 'Mariage spirituel'.

this, will come forth chastity, justice, patience, sweetness, and the whole august posterity of the virtues.²¹¹

Augustine too had also used the image of God as the Bridegroom of the soul, speaking of 'the true and true-speaking Bridegroom of the soul, fecundating [to engender] the offspring of eternal life, not allowing us to be sterile'.²¹² Thus he had held up the example of Mary to his congregation as a model of a faithful reception of God's word leading to the indwelling of Christ, telling them:

You are members of Christ and of Christ's body [...]. Therefore the members of Christ will give birth [to him] in the mind, just as the Virgin Mary gave birth to Christ in her womb; and thus you too can be mothers of Christ.²¹³

For in his view of 'incarnational rhetoric' the Church Father sees Christ as the divine Word clothing himself in human words, and through these entering into the human heart.²¹⁴ Had not the apostle Paul written in 1 Thessalonians 2. 13, 'When you accepted from us the word of the heard God, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it is truly is: the Word of God, Who works in you who have believed'? The birth of Christ in the soul, then, could take place through the believing acceptance of his word. It is an extremely powerful model of the transmission of, and access to, spiritual reality. We shall see that Sedulius appears to have been well aware of this.

'Making All Things Fruitful': Miraculous Generation

Although Sedulius refers to Christ as 'the Sower', his wish to avoid verbal preaching as much as possible is probably responsible for the fact that he does not present as such the source of this image, the Gospels' parable of the sower,²¹⁵ one of the clearest

²¹¹ Origen, *In Numeros homilia*, XX. 2, PG, 12, col. 728D: "De verbo tuo, Domine, in ventre concepi, et parturivi". [...] Est itaque vere beata soboles, ubi concubitus factus fuerit animae cum Verbo Dei [...] Inde nascitur generosa progenies.'

²¹² Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.*, LV. 17, lines 27–29, CCSL, 39, p. 690: 'verus et verax animae maritus ad prolem sempiternae vitae fecundans, et steriles nos non esse permittens'.

²¹³ Augustine, *Sermo* (Denis) 15. 8, ed. by Morin, p. 164, lines 9–10: 'et vos membra Christi estis, et vos corpus Christi estis [...] Ergo in mente pariant membra Christi, sicut Maria in ventre virgo peperit Christum; et sic eritis matres Christi'.

²¹⁴ Colish, *Mirror of Language*, p. 26.

²¹⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 20, CSEL, 10, p. 45. The parable of the sower is found in Matthew 13. 3–9, Mark 4. 13–20, and Luke 8. 11–15.

figures of divine fecundity. Juvencus had followed the Gospel and let Christ speak of the 'fruitful fields' of 'those who apprehend the precepts of salvation clearly, [precepts] that penetrate the soul, considering them with a steadfast attention, and bear hundredfold fruit by the strength of their virtue'.²¹⁶ Fruitfulness and the lack of it is the central theme, however, in another one of Christ's parables: that of the unfruitful tree which will be cut down and thrown into the fire (Matthew 3. 10–11, 7. 19; Luke 3. 9, 13. 6–9). Sedulius makes its message visible in his rendering of the story of Christ's cursing of the fig tree. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark the fig tree is cursed because it does not bear fruit and thereupon withers; Mark, however, adds: 'for it was not the season for figs' (Matthew 21. 19–22; Mark 11. 12–14, 20–24). The Gospels thereupon present Christ as explaining this rare punitive miracle to the apostles only as an example of what anyone who has faith can do, even so as to move a mountain into the sea: 'whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you will receive it, and you will' (Mark 11. 24). Juvencus follows the original and expands Christ's promise by speaking of 'a certain faith in the depth of the soul that will not lie trembling, wavering through sinful doubts', and of a tree withering and a mountain possibly falling into the sea 'credentum verbo' (by the word of believers).²¹⁷ He concludes: 'And whatever the faith of believers requests from a robust heart it will always obtain by a deserved act of power.'²¹⁸

Sedulius's rendering of this miracle is perhaps the clearest example of the difference between the two poetic versions of the Gospel as far as the prominence of the element of fruitfulness is concerned. He does not mention Christ's promise of what can be done by faith — probably assuming that his readers remembered the passage — and, instead, adverts to the dimension of spiritual fruitfulness in the story that the Gospel itself and Juvencus had left unelaborated. He may also have assumed his readers' knowledge of the fig tree as an image of the unbelieving Synagogue, as Sedulius's contemporary Eucherius of Lyon presented it.²¹⁹ After Christ had spoken the curse, Sedulius tells his readers,

²¹⁶ Juvencus, *Evang.*, II. 790: 'pinguia [...] arva', and 791–93: 'qui clarae capiunt praecepta salutis, | Quae penetrant animum sensu tractante tenaci | Centiplicemque ferunt virtutis robore frugem', both on CSEL, 24, p. 76.

²¹⁷ Juvencus, *Evang.*, III. 666–67, CSEL, 24, p. 107: 'fides [...] certa animi consistet in arce | Nec dubiis nutans vitiis tremebunda iacebit'; 'credentum verbo': Juvencus, *Evang.*, III. 670, CSEL, 24, p. 107.

²¹⁸ Juvencus, *Evang.*, III. 672–73, CSEL, 24, p. 107: 'Et quaecumque fides robusto pectore poscet | Credentum, semper digna virtute tenebit.'

²¹⁹ Eucherius of Lyon, *Formulae spiritalis intellegentiae*, IV, lines 352–53, CCSL, 66, p. 21.

At once the fig tree, deprived of its saps, withered and remained dead with dried-up branches. Whoever, therefore, brings forth nothing fertile to God, will be like a sterile trunk of burned wood. But the righteous will flourish like the delightful palm, ever having leaves; he will grow like the cedar of Lebanon and touch the stars with his top.²²⁰

The adjectives 'fertile' and 'sterile' — not mentioned in the Gospel originals — make explicit the contrasting dynamics which the poet is here concerned to show. The final images of the evergreen palm and cedar are amplifications of Psalm 91. 13 (92. 12).²²¹ Augustine, commenting upon this Psalm, had added that 'Christ is our root, who ascends into heaven'.²²² Sedulius's poetical touch of the tree top touching the stars, although echoing Ovid and Virgil, also seems to evoke the Tree of Life in Paradise.²²³ We shall see later that this latter symbol, here implicit, is a central underlying one in the poem.

In his prose version of the fig tree story, however, Sedulius expands again: he says that Christ's words were not a curse but a precept, and that the story should not be understood in its literal meaning 'seeing that the divine law works with spiritual matters'.²²⁴ The Lord, Sedulius says,

showed us the way of [eternal] life by parables of facts and words. All effort of human living, therefore, that does not attempt to nourish what might please God is like a useless tree with an unfruitful trunk.²²⁵

²²⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 50–56, CSEL, 10, p. 94: 'Confestim viduata suis ficulnea sucis | Aruit et siccis permansit mortua ramis. | Omnis enim quicumque Deo nil fertile nutrit, | Ceu sterilis truncus lignis aequabitur ustis. | At iustus palmae similis florebit amoenae, | Semper habens frondes et tamquam Libana cedrus | Multiplicandus adest et vertice sidera tanget.' Analysis and sources in van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 32–40.

²²¹ Proverbs 11. 28 and 30 are also similar: 'the righteous will bring forth like a flourishing green leaf, and 'the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life'.

²²² Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.*, XCI. 13, lines 9–10, CCSL, 39, p. 1288: 'Radix enim nostra Christus est, qui ascendit in caelum'.

²²³ Van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', p. 39, gives a number of examples of echoes of Ovid and Virgil. Tree of Life: Juvenecus had spoken of 'cruci [...] arbor' (*Evang.*, IV. 662, CSEL, 24, p. 140) but not developed the association. Cf. Klauser, 'Baum des Lebens', and Leclercq, 'Arbre', esp. cols 2705–08. Leclercq (col. 2696) quotes Paulinus of Nola's description of the Cross in the forest of the heavenly Paradise (Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 32. 17, CSEL, 29, pp. 292–93) as pointing towards this symbolism.

²²⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 5, CSEL, 10, p. 258, lines 11–13: 'quoniam spiritalibus causis convenit lex divina'.

²²⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 5, CSEL, 10, p. 258, lines 17–20: 'factorum sermonumque parabolis vitale nobis iter ostendit. Omnis igitur humanae conversationis industria, quae Deo nil studet nutrire quod placeat, tamquam pigri stipitis arbor inutilis'.

The miracle, then, is intended to be understood as a visible parable.²²⁶ Seeing it is seeing sudden transformation by a divine dynamic in action, here precipitated by the spoken word. Does the poet's image of the ever-flourishing tree reaching into heaven, however, perhaps also point to the dynamic quality of experiencing or performing miracles through faith? That the poet expects believers to experience miracles appears, as we have seen, in his emphasizing elsewhere, as the Gospels themselves also do, that faith-based insistent requests will never be ignored.²²⁷ Is 'fruitfulness', then, the quality of life that is constantly 'burgeoning' with good works and that may therefore expect to experience, or even be a channel for, Christ's miracles?

The two miraculous feedings in the Gospels are models of increase or generativity through Christ's divine blessing and at the same time figures of the effect of what later would be the Church's sacrament of the Eucharist. The first feeding is introduced as a repetition of Moses's ancient feeding of the tribe of Israel in the desert, which Sedulius briefly recounts in his first book, saying: 'What shall I say about the innumerable multitude's eating angelic food through heavenly bread, and a people, fed on streams of airy-sweet heavenly nectar, receiving its meat in rains and its victuals in hail?'²²⁸ There, he had already interpreted the event as a manifestation of Christ as 'bread'²²⁹ — the bread of the Eucharist must be meant. The feeding of the five thousand is explicitly compared to the ancient event:

When, thereupon, the true Prophet [Christ] as the archetypal Moses who saw that the people who had followed him into the desert felt their ancient hunger, he showed forth the ancient work in still greater deeds. Then he provided well-fed flesh through a bird; now he multiplied two fish. Then he rained sufficient manna; now [he gave] an abundance of bread, so that five loaves fed five thousand men.²³⁰

²²⁶ Van der Laan ('Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', p. 37) uses the phrase 'acted parable' for the miracle of the fig tree.

²²⁷ Matthew 7. 7–11; Luke 11. 9–13. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 15–16, and IV. 215–17, CSEL, 10, pp. 66 and 105–06, respectively; Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 2, and IV. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 233, line 4, p. 267, lines 15–19, and p. 268, lines 1–5.

²²⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 148–51, CSEL, 10, pp. 26–27: 'Quid referam innumeras caelesti pane catervas | Angelicos sumpsisse cibos, nimisque superni | Nectaris aëria populum dulcedine pastum | In pluviis habuisse dapes et in imbris escas?'

²²⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 59, CSEL, 10, p. 20.

²³⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 207–13, CSEL, 10, pp. 79–80: 'Cum dehinc populum sese in deserta secutum | Ut typicus Moyses verusque propheta videret | Antiquam sentire famem, maioribus actis | Antiquam monstravit opem. Tunc alite multa | Carnis opima dedit, geminis modo piscibus auxit; | Sufficiens tunc manna pluit, modo panibus amplum | Quinque dedit victum per milia quinque virorum'. See Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 192–201.

The prose version adds that Moses had 'repaired' 'the absence of the old kind of food through sterility' by 'miraculous increases'.²³¹ By implication, then, the sacrament of the Eucharist is also 'fecund'. Should one infer that it also produces fecundity or fruitfulness in the recipient? Returning to the poem, the second feeding points more explicitly to this quality:

While, in his healing, [Christ] restored the sick multitude through his power, it came to be the third hour and there was no food for such a crowd in the barren grass. And the hunger was about to double with the greatest efforts if the exhausted/'wounded' (*saucia*) crowd had returned home on the long road without having eaten. Moved to compassion by this, God, who is always present to the needy as Bread and brings food to places that have no produce, fed the enormous crowd of men with a few little fish and seven loaves [...]. So that you may be even more astonished, learn that not only was the food increased, and did he feed the multitude with a meal, but the leftover pieces also grew in their morsels. Fleeing hunger feared the seven heaped baskets, the leftovers of the crowd, when it saw, after the consuming of the morsels, an abundant harvest from a small seed.²³²

The passage and the mention of the 'seed' is reminiscent of Augustine's discussion of the same event, which reads:

The governing of the whole world is a greater miracle than the satisfying of five thousand men with five loaves of bread. [...] Who, however, even at this very moment feeds the whole world if not the one who created harvests from a few seeds? For he [Christ] did it in his quality of being God. Just as he multiplied the harvests from a few seeds, he multiplied five loaves in his hands. For the power is in the hands of Christ: those five loaves of bread were as though seeds, clearly not committed to the earth, but multiplied by the One who created the earth.²³³

²³¹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 18, CSEL, 10, p. 246, lines 11–12: 'antiqua victus sterilitate deficere, maxime mirandis antiqua solatia reparavit augmentis'.

²³² Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 257–65, 267–72, CSEL, 10, pp. 83–84: 'Dumque medens aegrum refovet virtute tumultum, | Tertia lux erat, sterilique in cespite nullum | Contigerat plebs tanta cibum, nimiosque labores | Nutribat geminanda fames si saucia callem | Turba per ingentem dapibus ieiuna rediret. | Qua flexus pietate Deus, qui semper egentum | Panis adest victumque locis sine frugibus infert, | Pisciculis paucis et septem panibus agmen | Pavit [pascit?] inorme virum [...] Plus ut mireris, et auctas | Disce fuisse dapes, epulas nutritiv edendo | Vulgus, et adtrituae creverunt morsibus escae. | Reliquiasque suas, sportarum culmina septem, | Expavit fugitiva fames, ubi fragmine sumpto | Vidit abundantem modico de semine messem.' See Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 224–31.

²³³ Augustine, *Tract.*, XXIV. 1, lines 11–13, 15–21, CCSL, 36, p. 141: 'Maius enim miraculum est gubernatio totius mundi quam saturatio quinque millium hominum de quinque panibus [...]. Quis enim et nunc pascit universum mundum nisi ille qui de paucis granis segetes creat? Fecit ergo quomodo Deus. Unde enim multiplicat de paucis granis segetes, inde in manibus suis multiplicavit quinque panes. Potestas enim erat in manibus Christi: panes autem illi quinque quasi semina erant, non quidem terrae mandata, sed ab eo qui terram fecit multiplicata.'

Christ's touch and blessing, then, makes everything grow; and the bread is, of course, again a pointer to the Eucharist — now itself implicitly imbued with Christ's generativity.

Sedulius's imaging of Christ's multiplication of the wine at the wedding in Cana — as will be seen, among other things, a figure of the Eucharistic wine — again explicitly adduces the fruitfulness theme, not present in the original:

O wonder! He converted poured water into wine: the fluid rejoiced in leaving behind its pale colour; wine having been bestowed, the happy water changed its flavour, and on all the tables sweet cups of unborn wine stood blushing. Christ filled six large tubs with this nectar; for he was the fruitful Vine, and by the power of his being the Vinedresser who makes all things fruitful, lets his mild protection make the gentle vine shoots bring forth eternal grapes.²³⁴

It is possible to see in Sedulius's happy image a poetic translation of what Augustine says in the introduction to his homily on this event; there he compares it with Christ's turning rain into wine every year and with his governance of the universe, the growth of seeds, the births of children — all of which, he says, should arouse more admiration than this relatively insignificant miracle.²³⁵ Sedulius's image of the blushing cups of unborn wine may seem to be only a poetic one, inducing the reader's delight. As also occurs elsewhere in the poem, however, we are shown a theological notion: Creation's joy and generation at Christ's command. In this miracle, then — and implicitly in the present experience of the Eucharist — a bit of postlapsarian 'nature' appears to be already restored along with mankind. According to Augustine, since God had created man 'ad imaginem suam' (after his image) on the sixth day, it would be in the sixth age of the world that would take place, through the Gospel, 'the reformation of our mind, according to the image of him who created us, and that water would be changed into wine, so that we might taste in the Law and the Prophets the Christ who had already appeared'.²³⁶

²³⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 3–11, CSEL, 10, p. 65: 'Mirabile! fusas | In vinum convertit aquas: amittere gaudent | Pallorem latices, mutavit laeta saporem | Unda suum largita merum, mensasque per omnes | Dulcia non nato rubuerunt pocula musto. | Implevit sex ergo lacus hoc nectare Christus: | Quippe ferax qui vitis erat virtute colona | Omnia fructificans, cuius sub tegmine blando | Mitis innocidas enutrit pampinus uvas.' Cf. John 2. 1–11. See Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 63–74.

²³⁵ Augustine, *Tract.*, VIII. 1, lines 1–34, CCSL, 36, pp. 81–82.

²³⁶ Augustine, *Tract.*, IX. 6, lines 12–16, CCSL, 36, pp. 93–94: 'Propterea et sexta die fecit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam, quia sexta ista aetate manifestatur per evangelium reformatio mentis nostrae, secundum imaginem eius qui creavit nos, et convertitur aqua in vinum ut iam manifestatum Christum in lege et prophetis sapiamus.'

Did Sedulius, like some of the other authors we have looked at, believe that the present miracles were the 'signs' that this age had now come? Although the 'fruitfulness' which he keeps emphasizing as though it were a personal experience may point to this, he does not say so.

But Sedulius adds something else to the Cana story: Christ's message to the disciples at the Last Supper, as the Gospel of John had rendered it.

I am the true Vine and my Father is the Vinedresser. [...] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. [...] If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you.' (John 15. 1, 4–5, 7)

In commenting upon this passage, Augustine had said that Christ is a Vinedresser who 'gives growth from within, for "neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but the one who gives growth is God"'.²³⁷ Sedulius has added the image of the Vine tenderly sheltering the shoots with its shade. The wine is almost certainly understood to be an image of that in the Eucharist. Unmarred, then, by Jesus's altercation with his mother, which the Gospel reports here, the miracle becomes a visualization of the happy and fruit-bearing inner presence of Christ; at the same time, it suggests a joyful vision of the future banquet with him in heaven (cf. Luke 22. 18). The 'fruit' to which Christ refers at the Last Supper, however, includes that of performing miracles. Elsewhere, however, Sedulius lets Christ say to his disciples that these are nothing without merit.²³⁸

'An Inexhaustible Flowing': The Inner Fountain

As we saw in the earlier writings, Christ is also imaged as the Fount — an image of continuous (self-)generation.²³⁹ Although it is not a visible miracle, Sedulius does include the story of the Samaritan woman in his poem. I would suggest that he understood it to point to an invisible miracle that is a central 'mystery'. Its antecedent figure is, presumably, Moses's producing a wellspring for his thirsting people in the

²³⁷ Augustine, *Tract.*, LXXX. 2, lines 9–11, CCSL, 36, p. 528: 'det [...] intrinsecus incrementum. "Nam neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat, sed qui incrementum dat Deus"'. Cf. I Corinthians 3. 7.

²³⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 164, CSEL, 10, p. 102.

²³⁹ Cf. however Böcher, 'Spring, Source, River, Stream'.

desert by striking a rock. In Sedulius's list of Old Testament wonders this miracle follows upon that of the manna and he renders it as:

Once more, the army — thirsting in sun-scorched plains, in which the soil was extremely dry since the sick earth long lay deprived of water, and in which the hope of drinking and staying alive had vanished — suddenly drew water from an arid quarry, and liquid merged from a sterile rock, the empty stones gushed forth with a new drink. In these things, therefore, already giving three gifts, Christ was in the bread, Christ was the Rock, and Christ was in the gushing [stream].²⁴⁰

The explicit references here are to the figures of the ecclesiastical institutions of the Eucharist and, presumably, the baptismal water. The sudden 'turn into an opposed figure', to use Sedulius's own words,²⁴¹ accentuated through the sharp contrasts — sun-scorched and sterile versus gushing forth — points to a transformational event, the inversion of an existing situation: something ostensibly impenetrable, sterile, and lifeless suddenly gives forth from deep within an abundant life-giving fluid. It is an ultimate inversion. Sedulius here seems to present it as a figure of the spiritual rebirth that was believed to take place during baptism.

In the story of the Samaritan woman, Christ tells her that he can give her water that 'will become in h[er] a spring of water welling up into eternal life'. In Sedulius's version, Christ is referred to as 'fons perennis aquae' (the fount of the eternally welling water) whose human body at that moment craves a drink.²⁴² Having recognized who he was, the woman

asked him to give her the gift of the inexhaustible flowing, to quench her thirst for the eternal, which no one deserves to escape unless, submerged in the pool of the Lord Christ, he receives the peaceful water, not of the body, but of the soul.²⁴³

There is no visible act here; the 'inexhaustible flowing' is precipitated by the word of Christ, fleetingly imaged as 'the fount of eternally welling water'. Augustine,

²⁴⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 152–59, CSEL, 10, p. 27: 'Rursus in exustis sitiens exercitus arvis, | Qua nimium loca sicca, diu qua terra negatis | Aeagra iacebat aquis, qua spes ablata bibendi | Vivendique fuit, subitas arente metallo | Hausit aquas, sterilique latex de rupe manavit, | Et ieiunia novum vomuerunt marmora potum. | His igitur iam sacra tribus dans munera rebus, | Christus erat panis, Christus petra, Christus in undis.' Cf. Exodus 16 and 17. 1–6.

²⁴¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 87, CSEL, 10, p. 22: 'Transit in adversas [...] figuras'.

²⁴² Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 223–24, CSEL, 10, p. 106. Cf. John 4. 14.

²⁴³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 229–32, CSEL, 10, p. 107: 'orat inexhausti tribui sibi dona fluenti, | Aeternam positura sitim, qua nemo carere | Dignus erit, Domini nisi mersus gurgite Christi | Percipiat placidas animae, non corporis undas'. See van der Laan, 'Sedulius Carmen paschale boek 4', pp. 143–52.

commenting upon John's story, says that the one who drinks of this water himself becomes a wellspring and that this wellspring consists of a benevolence that wishes to be of use to others — in those who wish to keep it for themselves, the living water will cease flowing.²⁴⁴ It points to the inner transformation precipitated by 'rebirth' in the baptismal font: the discovery in oneself of an 'inexhaustible flowing' — an image that points to the same burgeoning pattern as that of fecundity.

The image of Christ as a fount also occurs in different ways in two cures, however. In the story of the cure of the woman with the blood flow, Mark, the only one who tells this story, writes that when the woman with the blood flow touched Christ's robe, 'at once her fount of blood dried up' and she felt in her body that she was cured of the illness.²⁴⁵ Sedulius, as we saw, describes the woman as 'inundantem [...] perpressa cruorem' (stricken with a flowing of blood) and says about her cure: 'God felt this, from whose fount flowed what a hidden power gave'.²⁴⁶ Here, then, Christ as the Fount is an image of a never-ending source of power that stops a debilitating 'fount', again implying a kind of inversion. In the story of the cure of the fever of Peter's mother-in-law — in which 'woundedness' is again prominent — the meaning is somewhat closer to that in the story of the Samaritan woman:

suspended in uncertainty about her possible death, her wounded life burned under frosty dangers, and an immense heat cooked a lethal cold. But after the Lord's hand had touched her constricted body, the fiery glow went away, and [the heat in] her inner organs having all been extinguished, the violence of the flame died through [the agency of] the fount of hidden water.²⁴⁷

In the image of the Fount, then, Christ is pictured as an ever-flowing source of life.

Christ's other miracles, then, show him as restoring 'life' as fecundity or fruitfulness in various capacities: as the Word of God, the Creator Word incarnated in human language that precipitates the interior conception of Christ in the believing heart; as the fecundating Bridegroom of the soul and the resulting birth of spiritual virtues; as a figure of the Eucharist fecundating its recipients through the Bread

²⁴⁴ Augustine, *Tract.*, XXXII. 4, lines 7–9, CCSL, 36, p. 302.

²⁴⁵ Mark 5. 29: 'confestim siccatus est fons sanguinis eius'.

²⁴⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 123–27, CSEL, 10, p. 73: 'subitam furata salutem | Extrema de veste rapit siccisque fluentis | Damnavit patulas audax fiducia venas. | Senserat ista Deus, cuius de fonte cucurrit | Quod virtus secreta dedit'.

²⁴⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 34–39, CSEL, 10, p. 67: 'dubioque in funere pendens | Saucia sub gelidis ardebat vita periculis, | Immensusque calor frigus letale coquebat. | At pos[t]quam fessos Domini manus adtigit artus, | Igneus ardor abiit, totisque extincta medullis | Fonte latentis aquae cecidit violentia flammae.' Cf. Matthew 8. 14–15. See Mazzega, *Sedulius*, pp. 91–95.

and the Wine; as the Creator unceasingly fecundating all that grows; and as being or causing through his words an ever-flowing interior spring to well up in the believing heart. All these images together show that the restoration of the 'image of God' in man involves the restoration of 'life' understood as unceasing fecundity. The symbolic images in and around the miracles indicate that this fecundity is transmitted through Christ's sacraments. All these images will be seen to coalesce and crystallize in Sedulius's description of Christ on the Cross.

'Fecundating All': Christ and Human 'Fruitfulness'

The fifth and last book of the poem exhibits the final and greatest — inversional — miracle of Christ's physical death making the world live, which subsumes and surpasses all the others that let 'nature turn into opposed figures'. Thus Christ's humiliation by the soldiers is already inverted into a victory that saves mankind:

He [...] suffered all patiently with a subjected body and gave up his members for our salvation. For through these slaps [on the ear] he is the beginning of our salvation, that spittle upon the Lord cleanses our [interior] image, and with these blows our greatest liberty is applauded.²⁴⁸

A later image of Christ's scarlet robe during this whipping as figuring that of cruel Death now falls into place: since Christ is immortal, Sedulius writes, it must be Death by proxy who is here already being beaten and humiliated.²⁴⁹

Whereas Juvenecus tells a continuous narrative of the concrete events that happened at the crucifixion and, after referring to Christ as 'the Lord of light', says simply that 'his body hung fixed upon the tree of the Cross'²⁵⁰ while lots were being thrown for his tunic, Sedulius presents the reader with a momentous transformation happening, as it were, in a long, deep, and still moment:

At once, while he hung from the top of the spreading wood, transforming the anger of the critical moment into holy religion, he was the peace of the Cross; celebrating his

²⁴⁸ There may be an allusion here to the symbolic box on the ear which was given to a slave upon his manumission (*Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, pp. 27, 106). Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, v. 99–103, CSEL, 10, p. 121: 'Ille [...] patiens subiecto corpore totum | Sustinuit nostraeque dedit sua membra saluti. | Namque per hos colaphos caput est sanabile nostrum, | Haec sputa per Dominum nostram lavere figuram, | His alapis nobis libertas maxima plausit.'

²⁴⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, v. 166–67, CSEL, 10, p. 126.

²⁵⁰ Juvenecus, *Evang.*, IV. 655, 662–63, CCSL, 24, pp. 139, and 140: 'cruci fixum pendebat in arbore corpus'.

punishment by the violent pain in his own body, he clothed it with honour. And he made the torture into a sign of salvation (*salus*) instead — sanctifying these in himself, he blessed his torments.²⁵¹

Instead of passively suffering, Christ is accomplishing the final and greatest inversion of all: consciously transcending and inverting his torment into a healing of himself and of the world at the same time.

Then Sedulius transposes his image of Christ on the Cross upon that of the whole world:

For who does not know that the image of the Cross is to be revered — the Cross that, exulting, bore the Lord — for the powerful reason that, in itself, it holds together the four quarters of the fourfold world. From the top of the Creator [the region of] the splendid east wind shines, his feet rest upon the western star, his right hand holds the north and his left holds up the middle axis: all of nature lives through his creating members [or; through the body of the Creator] (*cunctaque de membris vivit natura creantis*), and Christ rules in all directions the world as encompassed by the Cross.²⁵²

Is this image only a visual aid to understanding the invisible spiritual truth of the crucified Christ's continuing creatorship determining the dynamics of visible reality? Earlier in the prose version, Sedulius may be describing this when, addressing Christ, he writes: 'you who contain/maintain the whole world through your holy directing', and 'who animate the limp mass of the unformed earth through diverse movements into living bodies'.²⁵³ By comparison, Augustine had typically explained the 'width, length, height, and depth' of the Cross as standing for *spiritual*

²⁵¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, v. 182–87, CSEL, 10, p. 128: 'Protinus in patuli suspensus culmine ligni, | Religione pia mutans discriminis iram, | Pax crucis ipse fuit, violentaque robore membris | Inlustrans propriis poenam vestivit honore, | Suppliciumque dedit signum magis esse salutis, | Ipsaque sanctificans in se tormenta beavit.' Cf. Augustine, *Enarr. in ps.*, XXXVI, ser. 2. 4, lines 14–21, CCSL, 38, p. 350, in which he says that from a torture the Cross has become a victory. In his *Tract.*, III. 3, line 19, CCSL, 36, p. 21, he says that 'ibi vulnera tua curavit, ubi sua diu pertulit' (he [Christ] cures your wounds where he for a long time suffered his own).

²⁵² Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, v. 188–95, CSEL, 10, p. 128: 'Neve quis ignoret speciem crucis esse colendam, | Quae Dominum portavit ovans, ratione potenti | Quattuor inde plagas quadrati colligat orbis. | Splendidus auctoris de vertice fulget Eous, | Occiduo sacrae lambuntur sidere planetae, | Arcton dextra tenet, medium laeva erigit axem, | Cunctaque de membris vivit natura creantis, | Et cruce complexum Christus regit undique mundum.'

²⁵³ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 2, CSEL, 10, p. 179, lines 3–4, 12–13: 'qui totum sacro nutu continens mundum [...], qui rudis terrae membra torpentia per diversos motus vivis animasti corporibus'. Cf. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 68–69, CSEL, 10, p. 20: 'qui diversa novam formasti in corpora terram | Torpentique solo viventia membra dedisti' (who created various bodies from new earth, and gave new limbs to the languishing soil).

phenomena: the width of the transversal arm points to the good works done in love, the vertical beam the perseverance until the end of time, the top is the heavenly destination, and its depth hidden in the earth is the invisible grace of God through which we do all our good works.²⁵⁴ Sedulius, however, is speaking of Christ's *body* as ordering and animating everything; as far as I could find, it is an astounding new image.

The prose rendering of the crucifixion is even more specific:

absolutely the whole substance of the world, fecundated by the body of the Creator (*Creatoris corpore fecundata*), manifests in itself the fulfilled lines of the Cross through its horizontal and vertical boundaries.²⁵⁵

Neither the Church as the mystical body of Christ nor the liturgical sacrament of the Eucharist as Christ's body can be meant here.²⁵⁶ With his imaging of the spiritual realities inherent in the Gospels' visible miracles, has Sedulius attempted to help the reader perceive and recognize the living patterns of Christ's ongoing making fruitful of *the visible world as his ongoing incarnation*? This would be a larger context in which to perceive bread and wine as his body and blood. Of the contemporary Church Fathers, Augustine has perhaps the most to say about Christ being responsible for fecundity in the world,²⁵⁷ but he does not connect it with Christ's *body* on the Cross/Tree of Life. The temporal coincidence and figural similarity of the *resurrection* of Christ's body from his tomb in a garden with the renewal of nature in the spring had, however, been noted earlier by Maximus of Turin. Although he had described the suffering on the Cross metaphorically as the 'seed' that produced 'fruit' in his disciples' belief,²⁵⁸ he also suggested a connection with nature saying,

Christ's resurrection is the redemption of all peoples. Therefore the Saviour took on his revived body in a garden, and his already-dead body blossomed again amidst flowering trees

²⁵⁴ Augustine, *Tract.*, CXVIII, 5, lines 5–20, CCSL, 36, p. 657.

²⁵⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, v. 15, CSEL, 10, p. 286, lines 4–5: 'Cuncta prorsus mundi substantia Creatoris corpore fecundata crucis in se lineam rectis obliquisque limitibus demonstravit impletam.' Similarly about Christ but without mentioning his body: 'fecundat' (Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II, 182, CSEL, 10, p. 56) and 'fecunditate largitur' (Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II, 14, CSEL, 10, p. 215, lines 15–16).

²⁵⁶ Sedulius says that Christ will rise after his death 'plena cum maiestate suae carnis' (with the full majesty of his flesh): Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, v. 13, CSEL, 10, p. 285, lines 5–6.

²⁵⁷ As in Augustine, *Tract.*, I, 9, line 18, CCSL, 36, p. 6.

²⁵⁸ Maximus, *Sermones*, LVI, lines 26–28, CCSL, 23, p. 224.

and white lilies, in order that he might find (*ut repperiat*) all things germinating and shining [as well]. For in this manner, after the frigid winter rigour, all the elements, from their kind of tombs, hasten to shoot up, so that when the Lord rises they too might arise. For in any case from the time of Christ's resurrection the air is healthier, the sun is warmer, and the earth is more fertile [...]. If, therefore, when Christ's body blossoms again everything is clothed with flowers, it is necessary that everything also brings forth fruit together with him, yes, even that all things become fruitful (*necesse est ut cum idem fructum affert, etiam universa fructificent*).²⁵⁹

The connection indicated — through the resurrection — appears to be one through cosmic 'sympathies' rather than intentional directing, although, Christ being the Creator, this could be implied. Sedulius's statement not only starts from a different 'informing' image, as it were — that of the Cross as a figure of the world — but his emphasis seems to be upon intentionality, of which cosmic sympathies could be a part. It could be his interpretation of a passage in the apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians 1. 15–20 that says about Christ:

he is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible [...], all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the Church [...] in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his Cross.

Elsewhere, Sedulius shows Christ's creation continuing in his gentle ruling of the world also by controlling the elements: the stilling of the storm on the sea and his walking upon the water. As is well known, the sea is an early Christian symbol of demonic forces.²⁶⁰ Whereas Matthew had related that he had 'rebuked' the winds and the sea, Sedulius writes that Christ 'commands' the storm, and the winds and waves are said to be 'glad' to obey him.²⁶¹ The prose version adds the epithet 'verus gubernator ac providus' (true Governor and Providence), and says that 'we should

²⁵⁹ Maximus, *Sermones*, LVI, lines 9–17, 19–21, CCSL, 23, p. 224: 'Christi enim resurrectio cunctorum est redemptio populorum. Ergo in hortulo salvator redivivum corpus adsumit, et inter florentes arbores et candentia lilia carne iam mortua reflorescit, et ita germinat de sepulchro, ut germinantia et nitentia cuncta repperiat. Sic enim post hiemalis rigoris frigidam quodammodo sepulturam pullulare elementa omnia festinarunt, ut resurgente domino et ipsa consurgerent. Nam utique ex resurrectione Christi aer salubrior est sol calidior terra fecundior [...]. Si igitur cum reflorescit Christi caro omnia floribus vestiuntur, necesse est ut cum idem fructum affert, etiam universa fructificent.'

²⁶⁰ Böcher, 'Water, Lake, Sea, Well, River — Sea, Lake'.

²⁶¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 63, 67, 69, CSEL, 10, p. 69. Cf. Matthew 8. 26.

feel everything to be subjected to the powers of Christ in humble devotion'.²⁶² Christ's walking upon water implicitly exhibits the same symbolism.²⁶³ This description does not seem wholly consistent with Sedulius's earlier remark about 'pertinax [...] natura' (obstinate nature).²⁶⁴ As will be seen, there may be a deeper layer of meaning here.

The description of Christ's body on the Cross as embedded in the topography of the world in fact matches geographical drawings later found in early medieval manuscripts.²⁶⁵ The whole visible world, then, appears to be an extension of Christ's constant creating, or perhaps *is his creating body itself*, spread out along the lines of the Cross: 'omnia gignens, | Omnia constituens' (generating all, establishing all).²⁶⁶ And the blood and water that ran out of his pierced side too are symbols:

For these indeed are meant to be sacred for the honour of religion: his body, his blood and the water are the three gifts of our life. Being reborn through the font, we are fed by the members and blood of Christ, and therefore are regarded as a temple of God.²⁶⁷

Following the Paschal events, these are the — institutionalized — visible Paschal gifts that make Christ's invisible salvation spiritually accessible to humankind, enabling it to return to the *fecundity* of the inner Christ as the image of the invisible God within.

Perhaps the closest that any earlier or contemporary author comes to Sedulius's image of Christ fecundating the world from the Cross is Paulinus of Nola's description of the Cross as the (implicit) Tree of Life in Paradise: 'in the flower-filled grove of Paradise, Christ stands as a snowy lamb under the bloody Cross'.²⁶⁸ Sedulius's image of Christ fecundating the world from the Cross, then, is in fact a way of saying

²⁶² Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 6, CSEL, 10, p. 235, lines 16–17; p. 236, lines 11–12: 'cuncta Christi virtutibus humili devotione subiecta [...] sentiamus'.

²⁶³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 219–35, CSEL, 10, pp. 80–81. Cf. Matthew 14. 25–27.

²⁶⁴ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, I. 20, CSEL, 10, p. 188, line 4.

²⁶⁵ As Kühnel, 'Carolingian Diagrams, Images of the Invisible'; she associates the notion of the four parts of the world with Revelation 7. 1–3 (angels holding the winds at the four corners of the earth) and writings by Augustine among others, but does not mention Sedulius (pp. 371–72).

²⁶⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, V. 281–82, CSEL, 10, p. 135.

²⁶⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, V. 289–92, CSEL, 10, pp. 135–36: 'Haec sunt quippe sacrae pro religionis honore: | Corpus sanguis aqua tria vitae munera nostrae. | Fonte renascentes, membris et sanguine Christi | Vescimur atque ideo templum deitatis habemur.'

²⁶⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Epist.* 32. 17, CSEL, 29, p. 292, lines 12–13: 'inter floriferi caeleste nemus paradisi | Sub cruce sanguinea neveo stat Christus in agno'.

that he is the Tree of Life, inhering in the natural world in the same way that, as the True Vine, he inheres in true believers and makes them 'fruitful'. As will be seen, the notion becomes explicit in his prose explanation of the Lord's Prayer.²⁶⁹

Not fond of loose ends, Sedulius paints Judas as he earlier imaged the Evil One, Christ's counterpoint, asking what use his too late remorse had

when the axe had been already plunged into the roots of the unspeakable tree that had brought forth the deadly fruit, that had produced infernal offspring from the ground, and whose evil trunk perishes in well-deserved flames.²⁷⁰

Evil is here given its own, parallel, 'tree'. Over against this, the root image informing Sedulius's notion of 'fruitfulness', then, appears to be that of Christ's body on the Cross as the all-fecundating Tree of Life. Attested to in the east in the early fifth century, the image is found in a painting dating from that period or later over a baptismal basin in the Roman catacomb cemetery of Saint Pontian.²⁷¹

Sedulius's poem points everywhere to the sacraments as the main channel through which the believer can connect with Christ. That this would mean connecting also with his 'fecundation' is evident again in the explanation Sedulius gives in the prose version for 'the great mystery',²⁷² or hidden revelation, in the inscription on the Cross designating Christ as 'the King of the Jews'. He says that this refers also to the future 'Jews',

for relinquishing the naturally useless prickliness of their seed, they at once lose the bitterness of the sterile wild olive tree when they are grafted onto the olive of fecund sweetness by the ointment of the holy chrism.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II, 17, CSEL, 10, p. 230, line 1. Cf. Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XIII, 21, lines 26–28, CCSL, 48, p. 404. Cf. Klauser, 'Baum des Lebens', col. 25.

²⁷⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, V, 122–25, CSEL, 10, p. 123: 'cum iam demersa securis | Arboris infandae radicibus, exitialem | Quae peperit fructum, feralia germina vertat | Funditus et dignis pereant mala robora flammis.' Similarly, Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, V, 10, CSEL, 10, p. 28, lines 5–8.

²⁷¹ Roller, *Les Catacombes de Rome*, II, pl. 89, n. 2 (p. 305). The painting is situated in a niche in the catacomb above a baptismal basin and under a representation of Christ's baptism in the Jordan. Roller (p. 340) states that this combination is unique. Because of the ninth-century provenance of the surrounding paintings, he assumes the same date for the Tree-Cross painting (pp. 305, 341).

²⁷² Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, V, 17, CSEL, 10, p. 286, line 21.

²⁷³ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, V, 17, CSEL, 10, p. 287 line 22 – p. 288, line 3: 'quia naturaliter germinis inutilem relinquentes horrorem, mox in oleam fecundae suavitatis unguento sancti chrismatis inserendi perdent amaritudinem sterilis oleastri'. Cf. 'Grafting', and 'Olive tree'.

This appears to be a misunderstanding of what Paul says in Romans 11. 17–24; there, ancient Israel is the fruitful, cultivated olive tree onto which the Christians, as branches of an unfruitful wild one, are grafted and onto which unbelieving Jews, now broken off, will again be grafted when they are converted to Christianity. Eucherius of Lyon explained ‘olea’ (the olive tree) as ‘sanctus misericordiae abundans fructibus’ (the holy man, abounding in the fruits of compassion), referring to Psalm 51. 10 (52. 8): ‘I am as a fruitful olive tree in the house of the Lord.’²⁷⁴ A hundred and fifty years later, Gregory of Tours would use the image of the fruitful olive tree to describe Saint Martin, implicitly grafted into Christ, performing miracles of compassion every day.²⁷⁵

What could this fecundation have meant for the believer? As we saw, in the Gospel of John, Christ tells his disciples at the Last Supper: ‘I chose you [...] in order that you should go and bear fruit [...] so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you’ (John 15. 16). This is almost certainly also meant to extend to their activities in the community for, earlier, they had been given the power to heal (John 14. 12). Sedulius’s including this saying in his poem — at a central place — when so much else has been left out could point to his wanting to validate the then rapidly spreading cult of dead saints as healers:

Meanwhile, he commanded his own disciples no less to be able to do all things, filling them at the same time with all powers: ‘Go,’ he said, ‘and expel the sad plagues of diseases. But to the tribe of Israel [...] announce the Kingdom of Heaven; remove demons from their place, drive off leprosy, and call dead corpses back to their stolen life.’²⁷⁶

Then Christ commits his flock to them, while himself remaining ‘the Good Shepherd’.²⁷⁷ The latter image does not occur in the original Gospel passages. Sedulius simply leaves out the rest of Christ’s instructions and teachings (cf. Mark 6. 7; Luke 9. 1), saying only that ‘doctrina fluens’ (the flowing doctrine or streams of doctrine), which he has imparted to them ‘qualiter ex uno paradisi fonte’ (as though from the one fountain in Paradise), become four huge rivers flowing through the world.²⁷⁸ In the prose version, Sedulius speaks of their healing and teaching as ‘deitatis opus’

²⁷⁴ Eucherius, *Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae*, IV, lines 348–49, CCSL, 66, p. 21.

²⁷⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Virtutes sancti Martini*, I. 12, lines 29–30, MGH SSrM, I. 2, p. 596.

²⁷⁶ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 158–64, CSEL, 10, p. 76: ‘Nec minus interea proprios iubet omnia posse | Discipulos totisque simul virtutibus implens: | “Ite”, ait, “et tristes morborum excludite pestes, | Sed domus Israhel [...] caelorum dicite regnum, | Daemoniis auferte locum, depellite lepram | Functaque subductae revocate cadavera vitae.”’

²⁷⁷ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 167–68, CSEL, 10, p. 76.

²⁷⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, III. 167–68, 172–75, CSEL, 10, pp. 76–77.

(the work of God), as a 'spiritali[s] [...] traditio' (spiritual tradition) and 'puri muneris gratia' (the grace of a pure gift).²⁷⁹ Further down, he quotes Paul's first letter to the Corinthians referring to the disciples as 'ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God'.²⁸⁰ For the disciples at least, then, performing miracles was part of the 'fruit' expected of them.

When relating the similar instructions to the seventy, Sedulius also reiterates the Gospel's stress upon the 'harvest' of souls — here the 'fruit' appears to be also spiritual offspring — and picks up on Christ's warning his disciples not to glory in their powers, adducing a saying from elsewhere in the Gospel to the effect that 'It is God's habit to put [quality of] life before deeds, for when the merit of goodness is lacking, miracles are nothing'.²⁸¹ The prose version quotes Christ's instructions verbatim.²⁸² Such deeds without merit, the poet continues, are simulations; like the feats of the Egyptian magicians competing with Moses, they 'produce signs not originating from God, but show magical appearances to human eyes through false images'.²⁸³ All true miracles, then, are performed by and through Christ.

In his prose version, finally, when Sedulius explains the meaning of the words of the Lord's Prayer 'hallowed (i.e. sanctified) be thy name', he again refers to the 'fruit' brought forth by his servants. Thus after quoting the Gospel of John's saying that Christ considered himself glorified (*clarificatus*) when he finds his glory (*claritas*) — as we have seen, a term that itself often points to miracles²⁸⁴ — in his disciples (John 17. 10), he continues:

Wherever, therefore, the signs of his sanctification [divinity?] are found, he considers himself sanctified there. For he proclaims that that holy honour, immeasurably gentle, is bestowed upon him by whatever it brings forth as fruit through his servants.²⁸⁵

²⁷⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 14, CSEL, 10, p. 244, lines 3, 4, 5.

²⁸⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, III. 14, CSEL, 10, p. 244, lines 13–14: 'ministr[i] Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei'. Cf. I Corinthians 4. 1.

²⁸¹ Matthew 7. 21–23. Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 163–64: 'Ius est quippe Dei vitam praeponere factis, | Nam merito cessante bono miracula nil sunt'.

²⁸² Cf. Luke 10. 1–12. Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, IV. 14, CSEL, 10, p. 264, lines 12–17.

²⁸³ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, IV. 170–71, CSEL, 10, p. 102: 'Signa dabant non sponte Dei, sed imagine falsa | Visibus humanis magicas tribuere figuras'.

²⁸⁴ As in John 1. 14: 'Et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis, et vidimus gloriam eius, gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre plenum gratiae et veritatis.'

²⁸⁵ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 222, lines 10–13: 'Ubi ergo et sanctificationis suae signa repperit, sanctificare se ibidem dicit. Pietas enim illa, sine modo mitissima, sibi conferri pronuntiat quicquid suis famulis ipsa fructificat.'

Since 'sign', in the context of the Christian life, can also mean 'miracle',²⁸⁶ it looks as though Sedulius counted the experience, or performance, of a miracle too as a divinely generated 'fruit'. For Sedulius, being 'fruitful', then, appears to have meant not only doing good deeds but, through participating in miracles, discovering, and becoming part of, Christ's miraculous generativity everywhere.

Juvencus, at the end of his poem, had focused upon Christ's teachings as the core message of the poem and concluded the story of Christ's earthly life with only his post-resurrection instructions to the disciples to baptize and teach the world 'our *precepts*, so that they may be able to attain eternal life' (emphasis added).²⁸⁷ As we have seen, Sedulius has focused instead upon Christ's miracles as making visible and preludizing upon the 'mysteries' of the salvation of the soul invisibly taking place in the Church's sacraments. Thus he describes Christ's several post-resurrection appearances, which Juvencus omits, as also making these visible. When the men cook the fish, which Christ caused them to catch, over a fire and eat bread, all of these are figures:

Who doubts that one faith is affirmed by these things: Christ is present in the water, in the fish, and in the bread, and the Holy Spirit is the fire. With the first we are cleansed, with the following we are fed, and with the last we are sanctified.²⁸⁸

This passage resembles Augustine's interpretation of the same story,²⁸⁹ and it approaches the meaning of Prudentius's hymns before and after eating: there, Christ is sensed everywhere and tasted in every ordinary food, not only in the Eucharist.²⁹⁰

And it is in his description of the disciples' recognition of Christ himself after his resurrection, however, that the poet finally reveals the up to then hidden message in his poem:

²⁸⁶ As in Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 222, line 10. Cf. Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, p. 759.

²⁸⁷ Juvencus, *Evang.*, IV. 799, CSEL, 24, p. 145: 'praecepta, ut vitam possint agitare perennem'.

²⁸⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, v. 401–04, CSEL, 10, p. 143: 'Quisnam ambigat unam | His rebus constare fidem, quippe est aqua piscis, | Christus adest panis, sanctusque Spiritus ignis. | Hinc enim abluimur, hoc pascimur, inde sacramur.'

²⁸⁹ Augustine, *Tract.*, CXXIII. 2, lines 1–34, CCSL, 36, p. 676.

²⁹⁰ Prudentius, *Cathemerinon*, III, CCSL, 126, pp. 11–18.

Soon the powerful Table Companion [Christ] shone in his being recognized by others in his breaking of the bread, for as the True Bread he is ever present to the open eyes of faith, which grace has made bright, so that they may perceive the living Lord.²⁹¹

The reference here is, of course, to Christ's statements that he is 'the Bread of Life' (i.e. the Eucharist) and that this Bread is his 'flesh [given] for the life of the world' (John 6. 48, 52). More wordy, the prose version, this time, is less precise:

Through the breaking of the bread he revealed himself to their senses and eyes, for since he is the true Bread, he became known to them through their eyes, which, an inner faith opening and uncovering them, led to the recognition of the Lord through the brightness of grace.²⁹²

How can the living Christ always be seen by the eyes of faith? If even the disciples recognized their teacher only at the moment that he broke the bread, the resemblance was perceived not in physical appearance but in the performance of a transformational spiritual dynamic. Whereas Augustine had simply explained the text, Sedulius, with his imaging of Christ's ways of turning 'death' into 'fruitful' life, I suggest, appears to have attempted to give the reader a dynamic model or *affectively experienced* 'visual concept'²⁹³ to recognize the living patterns of the cosmic Christ's continuing fecundation in the visible world — now perhaps, like the Eucharistic bread, sensed to be his ongoing incarnation.

'Word and Food'

Compared with Juvenius's presentation, what we see in Sedulius's is a move from the syntactically connected verbal sequences of discursive thinking to the leaping, contaminating, and clustering associations of imagistic thinking — a tendency which, as already indicated, has been observed also in other sources in this period. By the readers' imaginatively enacting the events they read about, the dynamic patterns they make visible would have been stored in the affective memory as

²⁹¹ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, v. 365–68, CSEL, 10, p. 141: 'Mox aliis conviva potens in fragmine panis | Agnitus enituit, quia verus panis apertis | Semper adest oculis fidei quos gratia claros | Efficit, ut Dominum viventem cernere possint.'

²⁹² Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, v. 30, CSEL, 10, p. 298, lines 5–8: 'confractione panis eorum se sensibus et oculis publicavit, quia cum verus ipse sit panis, illis luminibus innotescit, quos fides interior reserans ac detegens ad agnitionem Domini gratiae claritate perducit'.

²⁹³ Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, pp. 90–91.

models to recognize Christ's fecundizing patterns in nature and in the events of their personal lives.

Why did Sedulius designate his poem as a 'Paschal meal'? In his dedicatory letter, he says that he gave his poem this name 'quia PASCHA nostrum immolatus est Christus' (because the immolated Christ is our *pascha*)²⁹⁴ — a quotation from I Corinthians 5. 7. In early Christian usage, *pascha* has overlapping meanings: among other things, it can be the traditional fare at Easter of paschal lamb, and/or Christ as the symbolic sacrificial lamb associated with the Eucharist.²⁹⁵ Both meanings appear to apply in Sedulius's poem. One of the first scholars to focus upon the poem's exegetical dimension, Caroline Dermot Small, suggests that Sedulius may have regarded his poem as 'a humble reflection of the Eucharistic meal', but she does not develop this notion or explore its possible effects upon the reader.²⁹⁶ Did Sedulius perhaps intend his imaging of Christ's 'mysteries', including that of continuous fecundation, to be 'ingested' or internalized by the meditative reader as what today would be thought of as an operational sacramental symbol — one that, when experienced or enacted in the human subject, 'opens up' to awareness the interior presence of what it manifests?²⁹⁷

Remembering the apostle Paul's statement that the human word about God 'truly is' the Word of God that works in believers, I suggest that Sedulius's designation of his poem as a 'Paschal meal' might mean that he hoped that Christ, as the divine Word, would also be spiritually present in his own human words about him as 'food for the soul'. For in the spiritual exegesis of the Lord's Prayer in book two Sedulius had written:

In the 'daily bread' we hope for food for our faith, lest our mind ever feels a hunger for doctrine because she has not tasted Christ, who fulfils us with his word and his body, while at the same time himself remaining Word and Food. For the sayings of the Lord remain sweet in our mouths, sweeter than honeycombs and all kinds of honey.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Sedulius, *Epistola ad Macedonium*, CSEL, 10, p. 12, line 10.

²⁹⁵ Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, pp. 597–98.

²⁹⁶ Small, 'Rhetoric and Exegesis in Sedulius' *Carmen paschale*, p. 243.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Worgul, *From Magic to Metaphor*, pp. 90–92 and passim. A more recent treatment of what has been called 'the sacramental crisis' in the modern churches is Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*.

²⁹⁸ Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, II. 263–68, CSEL, 10, p. 61: 'Annonam fidei speramus pane diurno, | Ne mens nostra famem doctrinae sentiat umquam | A Christo ieiuna, suo qui corpore et ore | Nos saturat simul ipse manens verbumque cibusque. | Dulcia nam Domini nostris in faucibus

Here, then, 'bread' is the Word as well as Christ's body in the Eucharist. The background of this is, of course, John's rendering of Christ's words 'My father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world [...] I am the bread of life' (John 6. 32–33, 35). The prose version distinguishes a 'tripartitus intellegentiae sensus' (threefold understanding of meaning) here: (1) the bread with which we sustain our bodies; (2) the word of God — 'spiritualiter dicta [...] sentiemus hunc panem divinum esse sermonem' (spiritually speaking [...] we sense that this [daily] bread is the divine Word) upon which we should meditate day and night;²⁹⁹ and especially (3) the body of Christ in the Eucharist.³⁰⁰

The poet thus appears to have hoped that 'the living Lord' as the 'true Bread' or food for the soul might not only be ingested through the Eucharist and perceived with the eyes of the heart through the poem's images of Christ's continuous fecundation in the visible world and in the human heart. He may also have hoped that Christ himself, through his inherence as the divine Word in the poem's human words about him, would enter into its readers just as he had entered into Mary, according to 'the secret of divine generation': through the word. This inhabitation by the true Vine would then make the reader 'blossom' and become 'fruitful' — ready to expect and to experience *that* essence of all miracles.

haerent | Eloquia exuperantque favos atque omnia mella.' Similarly Augustine on 'daily bread', *Sermo* 57. 7, PL, 38, cols 389–90.

²⁹⁹ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 17, CSEL, 10, p. 224, lines 19, 20–21. Psalm 1. 2.

³⁰⁰ Sedulius, *Paschale opus*, II. 17, CSEL, 10, pp. 224–26. Mayr, *Studien zu dem Paschale Carmen des christlichen Dichters Sedulius*, p. 66, points to Augustine's having a similar view. Juvenius, *Evang.*, I. 595–96, CSEL, 24, p. 32, has only 'Vitalisque hodie sancti substantia panis | Proveniat nobis' (and let the life-giving substance of the holy bread be given to us today).



Figure 8. 'Saint Martin', mosaic, Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. Sixth century. Copyright Geneva Kornbluth.

‘YOU WILL SEE HIM PRESENT THROUGH HIS POWER’:
REFIGURING SAINT MARTIN’S MIRACLES
IN TROUBLED FIFTH-CENTURY GAUL

In the first forty years after Martin’s death in 397, Bishop Brictius’s Tours seems to have almost forgotten him. In the mid-fifth century, however, Bishop Perpetuus (458/59–488/89) expanded and intensified his predecessors’ modest initiatives towards a veneration of the once controversial former bishop, now as a heavenly patron who would focus the citizens’ loyalties and inspire fear in their enemies.¹ Perhaps the most important reason for this was the increasing general insecurity. For alongside shifting regional alliances and periodic uprisings, the city then found itself in the uncertain frontier zone between Catholic, still officially imperial, Gaul to the north and the south-western territory ceded in 418 to so-called Roman federates — in fact independent, Arian Visigoths.² Perpetuus’s effort to make Saint Martin’s tomb a regional centre of pilgrimage, and thus of perceived spiritual power, would also have been intended as a defence against their expansion. The *imaginaire* of his ideological programme comes out clearly in an inscription near Martin’s tomb in the elaborately decorated large church which the Bishop had built for him:

¹ On the development of Saint Martin’s cult in this period, see Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au V^e siècle*, pp. 140–57, and Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, pp. 13–21. Parts of an earlier version of this chapter will appear as ‘*Mutatio sensus*’.

² On the city in the immediately preceding period, see Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au V^e siècle*, pp. 119–40.

Here lies buried Bishop Martin of sacred memory, whose soul is in the hand of God. But he is wholly present here, as is made manifest to all by the grace of his deeds of power.³

Power in all its aspects is the central concept here. To familiarize everyone with the notion that the invisible saint could reach down from heaven in a visible act at any moment, Perpetuus commissioned a certain Paulinus — perhaps a former rhetor who had become Bishop of Périgueux — between 460 and 470 to write a long verse inscription for the new church, as well as to make a poetic version of Sulpicius Severus's then sixty-year-old stories about Saint Martin, along with a number of the saint's more recent miracles, to impress the community and its visitors.⁴ For one of these recent miracles, according to the testimony of a demon in a possessed person in Tours at the time, had been Martin's helping to secure the victory of the Roman general Aegidius over the Visigoths who had attempted to take Arles in 458 and were now very close to Tours.⁵ Paulinus's poem, 3622 hexameters long and divided into six 'books', was the first hagiographical epic; it almost certainly followed the example of the biblical epics of the early fourth-century Juvencus and fifth-century Sedulius, of which reminiscences appear in the text.⁶ And, like them, Paulinus's intention was to capture his readers' hearts by presenting his material in a manner that would charm as well as edify.⁷

In a number of passages scattered through the poem, Paulinus seems to reveal something of how the saint changed his heart and his life, perhaps already inspiring him to make a poetic version of Sulpicius's material before being asked. Whether he began on his own or whether Perpetuus commissioned all of the new version,⁸

³ Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, no. 13, p. 809: 'Hic conditus est sanctae memoriae Martinus episcopus cuius anima in manu Dei est; sed hic totus est praesens, manifestus omni gratia virtutum.' On the church: pp. 372–405.

⁴ On the date, cf. Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 156–57 (470), with Labarre, *Le Manteau partagé*, p. 20, dating the poem to 460/70. First facts about Paulinus: pp. 14–28. The poem and inscription are in Paulinus of Périgueux, *De vita sancti Martini episcopi libri VI* [hereafter *Vita Mart.*], CSEL, 16, pp. 16–159 (poem) and p. 165 (inscription).

⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 111–51, CSEL 16, pp. 143–44; see Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, p. 124.

⁶ Strunk, *Kunst und Glaube in der lateinischen Heiligenlegenden*, p. 35; Labarre, *Le Manteau partagé*, pp. 71–110.

⁷ As Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 6–8, CSEL, 16, p. 63; on Juvencus and Sedulius, cf. Kartschoke, *Bibeldichtung*, pp. 32–34 and 85–87, 41–45 and 67, respectively.

⁸ There is a scholarly discussion on which parts of the poem were commissioned by Perpetuus; see Labarre, *Le Manteau partagé*, pp. 19–28.

the poet appears to have been acquainted with the exigencies of the city's new situation. For instead of Sulpicius's portrait of Martin as essentially a monk and an eccentric outsider in the Gallo-Roman church, he presents an image of the living saint as the actively concerned bishop, and now the heavenly patron of the city.⁹

A recent study of Paulinus's poem by Sylvie Labarre is one of the first that gives serious attention to the content of this work, which philologists had up to then treated only as tiresome, very second-rate poetry.¹⁰ She points to its distinguishing characteristics in comparison with Sulpicius's original: amplification of the material, universalizing of the historical context, and the explicit intention to give moral and spiritual instruction.¹¹ For the poet's 'actualization' and 'humanization' of his subject matter aimed at making the saint's holy life recognizable as a spiritual model for the contemporary reader or listener.¹² Taking this a bit further, I would add that whereas Sulpicius's original had emphasized the saint's presence in the world above all as a man of holy power,¹³ Paulinus consistently foregrounds the fact that this power was exercised as and through compassion. As far as I can see, his consistent emphasis upon this as the saint's dominant quality is an original contribution, and unique in the then developing hagiographical genre. His purpose is didactic: alongside a spiritual conversion, he attempts to induce a similar compassion in the reader by adding visual details in his descriptions of the afflicted persons who were healed by the saint and with whom his readers or hearers can empathize and identify. In the late sixth century, a second poetic version of the Martin stories by Venantius Fortunatus is completely different in tone; intended for the contemporary ruling élite, it imagines the saint as above all a splendidly attired heavenly potentate to be admired and prayed to for protection.¹⁴ Nor is compassion highlighted in later medieval versions. Although from around 1050, affective meditation on Christ's passion began to be practised, and around 1200 compassion became a central theme in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, the story of Martin's life in the best-known medieval collection of saints' *Lives* — that of the Italian

⁹ See Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 733–44.

¹⁰ Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 10–11.

¹¹ Labarre, *Le Manteau partagé*, pp. 123–38.

¹² Labarre, *Le Manteau partagé*, pp. 228–32.

¹³ As in Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VII. 7, SC, 133, p. 268, 'ut qui sanctus iam ab omnibus habebatur, potens etiam et vere apostolicus haberetur'.

¹⁴ See de Nie, 'Poet as Visionary'.

Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1228–98) — mentions compassion only in a list as co-equal with other spiritual qualities.¹⁵

This chapter will begin with a look at Paulinus's inscription in Martin's church; pointing to now unfortunately no longer surviving pictures of Christ's and Martin's miracles there, it adduces these as proofs of the saint's ongoing compassion and effective power. The first verses of the poem reflect the same foregrounding of the visual dimension as the basis of belief. Then, after a consideration of the reasons given for writing in verse, we will examine the poet's amplifications and reconfigurations of Sulpicius's miracle stories, noting how his consistent visualization of Martin's deeds, and now also of his personal appearance (not mentioned by Sulpicius), are intended to induce not only empathy but also trust in the saint as a recognizable human being with a conspicuous holy dimension. A substantially new perspective upon the saint, however, emerges in Paulinus's rendering of Perpetuus's collection of Martin's more recent miracles, which constitute the sixth and last book of the poem. For in these miracles, instead of endlessly forgiving as he did during his life, the dead Martin is now also seen inflicting severe punishment upon those who disrespect his person or his church. Presumably, as in Paulinus of Milan's interpretation of the events around Ambrose, this modified image of the saint is a symptom of the church and the city's newly felt need of an effective heavenly defender in a situation of increased insecurity. Appended to the poem, finally, is Paulinus's amazing verse letter — in fact an *ex voto* or thanks offering to the saint — that tells very perceptively and in great detail how his grandson was cured from a life-threatening illness through physically touching and affectively believing Perpetuus's written report of Martin's recent miracles.¹⁶ The chapter will conclude with a close inspection of this revealing document.

'If You Doubt, Look at the Miracles': Paulinus's Inscription and the Aims of his Poem

Among other inscriptions in Saint Martin's new basilica, Paulinus's relatively long one pointed the pilgrim towards the saint's miracles. In it, we see many of his poem's key notions:

¹⁵ See McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*; Fleury, *Leiden lesen*; and Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Maggioni, II, 1133–53.

¹⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione nepotuli sui*, CSEL, 16, pp. 160–64.

You who, bowing to the floor, have rubbed your face in the dust, and pressed your moist eyes to the compacted ground, lift your eyes: with a trembling gaze take in the miracles and entrust your cause to the distinguished patron. No [written] page can hold so great powers, even though the stones and rocks are engraved with these inscriptions. An earthly construction does not enclose what the royal palace of heaven has received into its midst, and what the stars inscribe with flashing jewels. If you seek Martin's assistance, rise again through the stars and, after you have examined the angelic company in the upper air, reach heaven. There, search for the patron who is joined to the Lord, always following the footsteps of the eternal King.

And if you doubt, perceive the miracles that are taken in by your eyes, by which the true Redeemer honours the merit of his servant. You come here as an eyewitness among so many thousands of others; while you are looking at that which is spoken about, skilfully also weave what you see into the story.

Whatever a page in the Holy Books has expressed, [Martin] begins anew through God's renewing [of things]. Through this gift rejoice the blind, the crippled, the poor, the possessed, the distressed, the sick, the infirm, the oppressed, the imprisoned, the grieving, the needy: every cure rejoices through the [repetition of these] apostolic signs. Whoever comes weeping, leaves happy. All clouds give way; whatever troubles one's conscience, [the saint's] remedy clears [it] away. Seek his help: you do not knock on these doors in vain. His so greatly abounding compassion extends into the whole world.¹⁷

Seeing, then, is believing. Not the saint's miracles, however, but his compassion has the last word. Since the pictures — perhaps mosaics — were meant to be seen clearly, they were probably not too far up on the wall. And not only were they to function as 'proofs' of the miracles' historicity, seeing the events represented there would help the pilgrim better than words to visualize them, and thus experience

¹⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de orantibus*, CSEL, 16, p. 165: 'Quisque solo adclinis mersisti in pulvere vultum | humidaque inlisa pressisti lumina terrae, | attollens oculos trepido miracula visu | concipe et eximio causam committe patrono. | nulla potest tantas complecti pagina vires, | quamquam ipsa his titulis caementa et saxa notentur. | terrenum non claudit opus, quod regia caeli | suscipit et rutilis inscribunt sidera gemmis. | Martini si quaeris opem, trans astra resurgens | tange polum, angelicum scrutatus in aethere coetum. | illic coniunctum domino perquire patronum, | secantem aeterni semper vestigia regis. | si dubitas, ingesta oculis miracula cerne, | quis famuli meritum verus salvator honorat. | accedis reliquis inter tot milia testis, | dum narranda vides sollers et visa retexis. | in sanctis quidquid signavit pagina libris, | instaurat renovante deo. quo munere gaudent | caecus, clodus, inops, furiosus, anxius, aeger, | debilis, oppressus, captivus, maestus, egenus. | omnis apostolicis gaudet curatio signis. | qui flens adfuerit, laetus redit. omnia cedunt | nubila. quod meritum turbat, medicina serenat. | expete praesidium: non frustra haec limina pulsas. | in cunctum perget pietas tam prodiga mundum.' On this inscription and the pictures to which it refers, see Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 817–21. Older studies are Egger, 'Vom Ursprung des romanischen Chorturmkirche', and Sauvel, 'Les Miracles de saint-Martin'. I owe these references to Annemies Tamboer.

and remember them more vividly. Their location in the church is not clear: perhaps on the south wall, perhaps on a tower-like construction upon his tomb.¹⁸ Luce Pietri regards Paulinus's reference to the renewing of Christ's miracles as referring to a picture with its own inscription, on the north wall above the door leading to the River Loire, of Christ walking on water (Matthew 14. 29–31); the poet would be referring especially to the recent miracle described in the sixth book of his poem: the pilgrims saved from drowning in the Loire.¹⁹ And the mentioning of the heavenly court would point to another picture, with its own inscription, on the north wall: the church of Zion as that of Jerusalem, constructed upon the location of the Holy Spirit's descent upon the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2. 1–4). Pietri regards the episcopal throne of Jerusalem's first bishop, James, also depicted there, as a parallel to what will be seen as the poem's referring to Martin as the apostle of the Gauls and founder of the church of Tours.²⁰

At the beginning of his epic poem, Paulinus likewise emphasizes that seeing is believing. First, he points the reader to a symbolic dimension in the events to be recounted: Christ's miracles, he says, 'evangelici reserans mysteria regni' (opened the mysteries of the Kingdom [of heaven])²¹ — a statement reminiscent of Sedulius's concern with these. Since these miracles had not been seen by everyone everywhere, the poet continues, those of 'weak intelligence'²² hesitated to believe them on hearsay,

for the things recounted move [their hearers] through words, but the things [themselves], through their presence; [the people] may indeed be persuaded through [stories of] things not seen, but what is seen is demonstrated. That is why he who sows equal compassion through the whole world also gave many miracles in our lands by giving to the faraway Gauls the illustrious deeds of Martin.²³

Rather than authenticating Martin's miracles by naming persons and places, as Sulpicius had done, Paulinus here seems to imply that he intends to make them

¹⁸ Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, p. 820, n. 38.

¹⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 351–415, CSEL, 16, pp. 153–55.

²⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 9–10, CSEL, 16, p. 19.

²¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 2, CSEL, 16, p. 19.

²² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 4, CSEL, 16, p. 19: 'fragili sensu'.

²³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 6–10, CSEL, 16, p. 19: 'Nam verbis comperta movent, praesentia rebus; | suadentur non visa quidem, sed visa probantur. | ille ergo, in totum cui per miseratio mundum | sevit et in nostris miracula plurima terris, | donans extremis Martini insignia Gallis.'

'present' to the reader or listener through his elaborate word-pictures. His added visual details, then, instead of being overly ample 'decoration' as some scholars have thought,²⁴ would — like Sedulius's images — induce the reader or listener to visualize, and through the spontaneous affective mimesis this entails, imaginatively re-enact the event presented. The poet's frequently interjected direct addresses to the saint, and to other persons appearing in the story as well as to the reader,²⁵ also point to his inducing a sense of presence that would engage the reader's affective participation in what was happening. Was the poet himself ever invited to recite the epic in the church at the saint's feast or, as an apotropaic ritual, in a time of acute danger — as the poet Arator would recite his epic about divine power in the book of Acts during four days in mid-sixth-century Rome, offering a vision of hope while the Ostrogoths pounded the city's walls?²⁶

In the inscription, another image for the pilgrim's mind to re-enact is that of seeking out his 'patron' by rising through the stars, seeing the angels there and entering the palace of the heavenly King. As will be seen, Paulinus's poem explicitly describes Martin as spiritually ascending to heaven during prayer. The image encourages a leaving behind of the everyday sensory world to enter a non-sensory dimension of awareness; it attempts to lift the reader's mind into an imaginative seeing of spiritual realities through verbal images that represent the invisible patterns at work in the events it describes.

At the same time, it stresses that the saint's tomb is in fact the centre of a real and all-pervading, if invisible, power. Thus before reporting the recent miracles, Paulinus addresses the dead saint himself as now too always present and listening to those praying, and then explains:

for his spirit is enveloped by his nearby body, and grace suffuses the holy stone [of his tomb]. Nor is he far away from petitioning faith when shouting hearts present their cases without voice or sound. He who reads the words of the mind, who looks into the feelings and sees the heart, discerns the deepest secrets of one's inner being.²⁷

²⁴ See Labarre, *Le Manteau partagé*, pp. 10–11.

²⁵ For instance, Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 45–53 (to Martin's slave while in the army), I. 90–93 (to Martin himself), I. 170–72 (to the reader), CSEL, 16, pp. 20–21, 22, 25, respectively.

²⁶ Cf. Hillier, *Arator on the Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 1–19.

²⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 7–12, CSEL, 16, p. 139: 'Quam bene vicinus propter conplectitur artus | spiritus et sanctum perfundit gratia saxum! | nil longe est pulsante fide. clamantia corda | allegant proprias sine voce et murmure causas. | mentis verba legit, qui sensum intropicit et cor | visit et arcanum percenset pectoris antrum.'

These words function as a recipe to be re-enacted by his listeners, especially those listening in the church, for opening one's heart and sensing/imagining/experiencing the saint's looking and listening there. The pilgrim, however, is also encouraged to try to 'see' the saint. For Paulinus promises at the end of the poem, 'si corpore paulum | a visu abstraheris, praesens virtute videris' (if you remove yourself a little from physical sight, you will see him present through his power).²⁸ This can only be an imaginative kind of seeing that is likely to include memory images of the stories heard about. Like Sedulius, Paulinus here, quite consciously, appears to regard the imaginative internalization of visual 'models of' and 'models for' the perception of what Geertz called 'belief reality'²⁹ as the most effective manner of accessing what for him was the real reality of religion.

'A Change of Awareness': Personal Reflections

It is only in the latter part of the first book of the poem, when Paulinus is about to recount Martin's first miracle, the raising of the dead catechumen, that he intrudes as author into his subject matter, pausing to ask the saint for inspiration before describing this signal event. And, not wholly surprisingly, he presents his attempt at Christian poetry as the result of something like a personal conversion that is a spiritual version of the miracle about to be recounted:

Here we now remember the verses of the ancient poets: when suddenly wonders struck their dumbfounded perception, their foolish madness invoked the miserable Phoebus, and they did not at least allow the fictive Muses to rest. The Delphic temples shook through the false Apollo, and the whole group of the deaf Sisters was seized. Called forth by [such] violence, these monsters filled them with a total frenzy.

We who seek our meaning and words from Christ, pray to you to inspire us a little, O Martin, worshipper of Christ! You who were able to restore life to the dead, with the aid of the Lord, save [my soul]. I shall be the first to have been given the miracle of a life given back, the first to break through the enclosure of a decaying tomb. Let my patron [hear] my just [prayer]: that, dead in my whole heart, a living mind may speak forth the glory of his praise.

Therefore, although his sublime deeds are too great for my speaking ability, and the measure of my eloquence is not equal to [expressing] his praises, I begin. Whoever you are

²⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 869–70, CSEL, 16, p. 138.

²⁹ Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', pp. 124, 112–13, 118.

who are reading and who despise so vile verses: while you may laugh at the words, you will admire the deeds done.³⁰

The latter thought derives, of course, from Sulpicius's preface.³¹ What Paulinus appears to be describing is his inner change of heart from a purely aesthetic sensibility to one that attends to the real substance of life; Sedulius's similar declaration and his images of empty games and sterile death versus fruitful life seem subjacent here.

Another reflection, at the beginning of the third book, is a (conventional) protestation of modesty in which the poet nevertheless hopes that his poetic flute, 'even if it cannot speak of great things, will tell delightful ones'.³² No disingenuousness here. Although the poet elsewhere explicitly addresses his work to those who cannot or will not take the trouble to read Sulpicius's original,³³ one might well wonder if the ordinary churchgoer would have been expected to understand Paulinus's often convoluted poetical diction. Probably, the poem was meant to be recited especially for the more educated, including those of prominent visitors to the shrine — who may have found Sulpicius's intentionally sober and concise prose too bare to suit their rather baroque tastes.

Like his predecessor and namesake Paulinus of Nola and in similar wording, our poet more often describes his new hope for inspiration from Christ and his patron saint,³⁴ explicitly or not, as in some way similar to a miracle about to be recounted. Thus he says in a prayer that introduces Martin's resuscitation of a dead infant, who then embraces the saint instead of his mother:

³⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 298–316, CSEL, 16, p. 31: 'Hic modo si veterum recolamus carmina vatum, | cum subito attonitos quaterent miracula sensus, | clamaret miserum vecors insania Foebum | nec sineret falsas saltim requiescere Musas, | Delfica mentito quaterentur Apolline templa | cunctaque surdarum raperetur turba sororum, | excita vel totum complerent monstra furorem: | Nos, quibus a Christo sensus vel verba petuntur, | christicola inspires paulum Martine, precamur. | tu, qui defunctis potuistis reddere vitam | auxilio domini fultus, mihi redde salutem: | primus ego indultae faciam miracula vitae, | primus faetentis disrumpam claustra sepulchri. | iusta precor toto defunctus corde patronum, | ut tantae laudis titulos mens viva loquatur. | ergo, licet fandi vires sublimia vincant | gesta nec orandi modulus se laudibus aequet, | adgrediar. tu, quisque legens tam vilia temnis | carmina, dum verba inrides, mirabere facta.'

³¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, ep. ded., III, SC, 133, p. 248: 'res potius quam verba'.

³² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 8, CSEL, 16, p. 63: 'grandia si nequit effari, vel suavia dicet'.

³³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 9–10, CSEL, 16, p. 81.

³⁴ Strunk, *Kunst und Glaube in der lateinischen Heiligenlegenden*, pp. 35–39.

Go ahead now, continue, with your noble course of virtuous deeds; re-present [these to me] by composing your history, O my Muse, bishop, and my spirit! Let your help touch the lyre of my heart and of my mouth! Those who speak madly press the senseless Muses to their frenzied hearts, [but it is] Martin [who] moves us: such a change of awareness (*mutatio sensus*) delights me; my inner parts thirst for such a wellspring.³⁵

The phrasing reminds us, of course, of the apostle Paul's saying: 'Not I live but Christ in me' (Galatians 2. 20); and the wellspring — a Christian counterpart of the pagan poets' Castalian spring — of Christ's words to the Samaritan woman (John 4. 13–14). As for the phrase 'a change of awareness': we saw that the word *sensus* can mean perception, awareness, consciousness, sensibility, feeling, sentiment, and a manner of thinking.³⁶ Earlier, after relating Sulpicius's story of Martin's curing Paulinus of Nola's eye ailment, our poet — therewith modestly revealing his name — had requested a similar enlightenment:

Would that the healing of the holy patron should touch the darkness of my heart with such light, that he would perform again the mysteries of this ancient deed: the same name, the same doctor, the same need for healing!³⁷

The habit of understanding events through analogies with others, and thus as spiritual patterns, is again very evident.

In a conventional poetic formula further down, Paulinus protests that his speaking ability is overcome by 'gloria virtutum' (the glory of [Martin's] deeds of power),³⁸ which speak better for themselves than when recounted in words:

poets bring obscure things to light by speaking; but we are overcome by the light of his praiseworthy actions, and lie buried, oppressed by so much splendour. Would that the touch of the glory of so illustrious a patron illuminate our darkness a little, lest we cover the

³⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 245–51, CSEL, 16, p. 91: 'Perge age continuo virtutum stemmata tractu | historiam pangendo refer, mea Musa, sacerdos, | ingeniumque meum; tu cordis plectra vel oris | auxilio contingere tuo. vesana loquentes | dementes rapiant furiosa ad pectora Musas: | nos Martinus agat. talis mutatio sensus | grata mihi est, talem sitiunt mea viscera fontem.' An alternate reading of 'mea Musa' is 'via versa' (p. 91, note to line 246); this also points to a conversion.

³⁶ Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, p. 752.

³⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, II. 699–702, CSEL, 16, p. 61: 'Utinam nostri tenebras contingere cordis | tali luce velit sancti medicina patroni, | reddat ut antiqui rursum mysteria facti | nomen idem medicusque idem, par causa medellae.'

³⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 498, CSEL, 16, p. 100.

brightness of his story with a dark heart, and lest our faulty writing diminish the honour of his praise!³⁹

Elsewhere again he seems to indicate that it is especially his heart which is involved in the poetic process. Now addressing himself as a poet, he says:

commit your extinguished flame to the Lord, so that the stiff coldness of your mind may warm up by Christ's breath, and Martin's prayer may melt the ice of your heart and make your brute voice burst forth as it once did through the miracle of a similar deed.⁴⁰

Not surprisingly, the story of Martin's cure of a mute girl then follows. Here, although the Holy Spirit is the inspiring grace, it is — significantly — again said to be Martin himself who engages the poet's heart. Together they bring forth the poetic process as an interior miracle in the heart that resembles the visible cure of the mute girl. Gerhard Strunk adjudges this and similar passages in Paulinus to be not only a formal Christian adaptation of the ancient pagan tradition of the Muses but, more essentially, the presentation of a new awareness of having been raised from spiritual death through baptism and thereafter transformed through inhabitation by Christ;⁴¹ in this case, it would have been mediated through the example of a compassionate saint. Paulinus's primary purpose, Strunk writes, is not to write a history of the saint's life but to describe the miracle of God's revelation in and through a human being.⁴²

The poet returns to the theme one last time in his presentation of Martin's contemporary miracles in the sixth book:

Let us be filled with another spirit to celebrate the honours of such praise, [one that] gives words and joy to our heart. So that I might seek to sing of truth, let my Muse, my patron, cherish and favour my awareness with his grace lest I am overcome by the splendour of his work; lest, oppressed by so much light, I turn my weak eyes away from that light; and so

³⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 490–96, CSEL, 16, p. 100: 'Obscura poetae | in lucem fando expediat: nos lumine laudis | vincimur et tanto obpressi splendore latemus. | atque utinam nostram paulum rarescere noctem | gloria tam clari faciat contacta patroni, | ne lucem historiae tenebroso corde tegamus | et titulum laudis minuant peccata loquentis.' Further down, he again expresses his fear 'splendorem laudis trepidus corrumpo relator' (as a trembling storyteller, to corrupt the splendour of [the saint's] praise) (v. 483, CSEL, 16, p. 124).

⁴⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 13–17, CSEL, 16, pp. 107–08: 'Age et extinctam domino committe favillam, | ut rigor ingenii Christo adspirante tepescat, | et glaciem cordis Martini oratio solvat | ac faciat brutam quamprimum erumpere vocem, | ut quondam similis meruit miracula facti.'

⁴¹ Strunk, *Kunst und Glaube in der lateinischen Heiligenlegenden*, pp. 36–39.

⁴² Strunk, *Kunst und Glaube in der lateinischen Heiligenlegenden*, p. 39.

that I may sing of high and heavenly things with an enlightened perception (*perspicuo [...] sensu*).⁴³

We are reminded here again of his namesake of Nola's 'conceiving divine apprehensions' entailing a divinatory envisioning, through Christ, of 'God's great laws', and of Synesius's 'holier kind of perception'.⁴⁴ Our poet adds for those who hesitate to believe him that miracles were easy for Christ, and that he had commanded them to be performed by the saints as well, to increase their honour.⁴⁵ For some, then, the possibility of a saint's miracles perhaps still needed to be defended. Elsewhere, however, he speaks (tongue-in-cheek?) of 'indoctam illiciens tot per miracula plebem' (seducing the uneducated people by so many miracles).⁴⁶ As we saw, he nevertheless adduces them as proofs of the truth of the Christian faith.⁴⁷

As Paulinus presents it, then, the saint has become the poet's new 'spirit' and dictates the poem's content. At the close of the fifth book, the end of his poetic rendering of Sulpicius's writings, Paulinus gives some insight into this poetical process, saying:

I pray to him that he will want to be always manifestly present in the miserable heart of the poet, so that when my meditation turns into poetry (*cum meditatio carmen finierit*), the transcribed prayer will hold his praise.⁴⁸

Poetic inspiration, then, takes place in the heart during a meditative, prayerful, state in which the saint is felt to be present there. The images intuited may have been implicitly understood to resemble what our poet's earlier namesake regarded as 'divine apprehensions'.

⁴³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 341–47, CSEL, 16, p. 152: 'Nos alter repleat tantae ad praeconia laudis | spiritus et nostro det verba et gaudia cordi. | ut verum cantare quaeam, mea Musa patronus | me foveat vegetetque meum sua gratia sensum, | ne vincar splendore operis neu lumine tanto | obrutus instabiles oculos a luce reflectam, | perspicuoque canam celsa et coelestia sensu.'

⁴⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, XXII. 79–86, CSEL, 30, p. 190; Synesius, *Peri enyption*, V, ed. by Garzya, p. 564.

⁴⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 348–50, CSEL, 16, p. 153.

⁴⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 372, CSEL, 16, p. 34.

⁴⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, V. 602–04, CSEL, 16, p. 128.

⁴⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, V. 871–73, CSEL, 16, p. 138: 'precor ut misero manifeste corde poetae | semper adesse velis, ut cum meditatio carmen | finierit, teneat transcripta oratio laudem'.

'Mysteries of the Kingdom': Miraculous Cures as Models for Spiritual Healing

As we saw, at the very beginning of his poem, Paulinus says about Christ's miracles during his life on earth that they had 'opened the mysteries of the Gospels' Kingdom [of heaven]'.⁴⁹ His application of the term 'mystery' to miracles, too, may derive from his reading of Sedulius who, as we saw, uses them as experiential models and parables of Church doctrine. Now Martin's miracles too are shown to manifest the hidden larger truths of the Christian faith, and they are also explicitly pointed to as visualized models of personal spiritual events that could apply to the reader or listener. Martin is now the exemplar for everyone's spiritual life.⁵⁰

'The Single-minded Hope of Salvation Was the Remedy': Martin's Healing Himself

Sulpicius had presented Martin's very first cure, of himself, when still a hermit on an Italian island, in one sentence: 'When he felt the force of the poison increasing in himself, and death to be near, he repulsed the imminent danger through prayer: at once, all pain was put to flight.'⁵¹ Paulinus adds detail, shows some knowledge of medical self-care books,⁵² and adds an explicit 'lesson'. When Martin and his companion felt the inadvertently eaten hellebore's deadly poison spreading in their whole bodies, he writes, they

sought the Lord with all the power of their praying, but their piety had preceded their prayers: not the method of medical skill but the single-minded hope of [divine] salvation was the remedy that saved them. Let us, who seek life by paying out all our wealth, who are accustomed to pour out rewards of property and our coins to the doctors so as to prolong the time of our life, consider this. Did they use cups of selected juices, and medicines read about in ancient books? No. Their quick recovery took place without expense or medical skill; their hearts deserved it, the Word granted it: let us admire this and praise God! Their voice was silent, but their cause was supported by the clamour of silence; the doctor was

⁴⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 2, CSEL, 16, p. 19: 'evangelici reserans mysteria regni'.

⁵⁰ Cf. Brown, 'Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity'.

⁵¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VI. 6, SC, 133, p. 266: 'cum vim veneni in se grassantis vicina iam morte sensisset, imminens periculum oratione repulit statimque omnis dolor fugatus est.'

⁵² A number of these circulated; see Rousselle, 'Du sanctuaire au thaumaturge'.

felt, not seen; their whole bodies, whose veins had been closed, now admitted a complete cure into their inner organs.⁵³

The specific mention of doctors' costs, medical books, and medicines appears to indicate that Paulinus had no little experience of all of these.⁵⁴ Here, however, he regards a cure as resulting from an openness of the heart that makes the reception of Christ's healing power possible. The reference to 'closed' veins is interesting: if physical veins are meant, how could they 'open'? The term seems to point in any case to a state of mind: a turning from a state of affective closedness to one of receptivity to divine energy through an opening up to what we today would call dream consciousness or the unconscious sphere. According to Jung, prayer can effect this kind of opening.⁵⁵

'Christ's Well-known Compassion Was Requested': Resuscitation

Sulpicius's original story about the catechumen's resuscitation gives details mostly about Martin's visible actions.⁵⁶ Before sending the others away, he does say that Martin, 'tota sanctum Spiritum mente concipiens' (taking hold of the Holy Spirit with his whole mind),⁵⁷ prostrated himself upon the dead man's body and prayed. When 'sensissetque per spiritum Domini adesse virtutem' (he had sensed through his spirit that the power of the Lord was present),⁵⁸ he lifted himself up and, while looking expectantly at the dead man's face, waited confidently for the result, which came about slowly during the following two hours. Although the event, at least in the telling if not in the act itself, may have been modelled upon that of Elijah and

⁵³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 272–84, CSEL, 16, p. 30: 'Pergitur ad dominum tota virtute precandi, | sed praegressa preces pietas. nil artibus actum, | sed praesens medicina fuit spes sola salutis. | cernamus, toto qui vitam quaerere censu | effusa in medicos pretii mercede solemus, | ut crescant nostris vivendi tempora nummis, | quidnam hic electis egerunt pocula sucis | lectaque in antiquis quondam medicamina libris. | hic certe celerem sine sumptu aut arte salutem | cor meruit verbumque dedit: miremur ovantes. | vox silet et causa adstruitur clamore tacentum. | sentitur medicus nec cernitur: omnia clausis | membra poris totam admittunt ad viscera curam.'

⁵⁴ On medical treatments and self-help books in this period, see Rousselle, 'Du sanctuaire au thaumaturge'.

⁵⁵ Jung, *Synchronicity*, p. 102; see also Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, pp. 62–63, on this 'borderzone'.

⁵⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VII. 1–4, SC, 133, pp. 266–68.

⁵⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VII. 3, SC, 133, p. 268.

⁵⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, VII. 3, SC, 133, p. 268.

the widow's son (1 Kings 17. 17–24), its visible gestures also look somewhat like a modern resuscitation.

Paulinus's added details strengthen this impression, but he is also more specific about how he thinks Martin accessed the healing grace. When the saint entered alone into the cell of the dead man, the poet tells us,

he threw himself upon his dead friend, embraced with his whole body the cold limbs of the deceased, and breathed a light breath above the rigid lips. At the same time, almost all his hope being brought before the Lord: in his customary piety, he prayed; [Christ's] well-known compassion was requested; and *by believing [that he would be heard] the merit of his faith deserved [it]*. With the pure faith of his heart, he saw God to be present, and his heart sensed the effect through its pious sighs.⁵⁹ (emphasis added)

Not the Holy Spirit but Christ's compassion, upon request, is pointed to as the active agent here. And, significantly, Martin's firm belief that this grace will come is explicitly said to have precipitated the event. As will be seen, Paulinus later describes this same specific act of believing as effecting the 'arrival' of Martin's healing power to his grandson. Firmly believing, then, is in fact a silent invocation and brings the saint's power to the spot. It is tempting to suspect that this repeated observation is based upon Paulinus's interpretation of his own experience. Martin's 'seeing' God to be present — perhaps a substitution having to do with poetic metre, but possibly also another indication of the poet's visual orientation — and the saint's sensing the presence of divine power through his own body's *sighing* is, as far as I know, a unique description in the hagiography up to this time. One is reminded of Augustine's more general 'breathing-in' of God.⁶⁰ The adding of this detail too may point to the poet's having experienced something like this himself, and it functions as the sensory component and verification, as it were, of an invisible event.

In Martin's first cure of illness, that of the paralysed and mute girl in Trier, the image of another miraculous resuscitation is latent, for the subject is said to have been as good as dead because of the constrictions of paralysis: she 'was wasting away, consumed by a serious illness, and her inert limbs, deprived of their use, could not move at all; life had already left her flesh, and with her chest already

⁵⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 329–36, CSEL, 16, p. 32: 'Tum super exanimum sese proiecit amicum, | cunctis frigentes membris conplectitur artus | adspirans tenuem super ora rigentia flatum. | attamen ad dominum penitus spes tota refertur: | adsueta oratur pietas, miseratio nota | poscitur et meritum fidei credendo meretur. | vidit adesse deum puri fiducia cordis, | effectum piis senserunt viscera flabris.'

⁶⁰ Augustine, *Conf.*, IX. 7. 16, lines 32–35, CCSL, 27, p. 142.

becoming cold, she could hardly breathe anymore'.⁶¹ In the description that follows, the image of a spreading poisonous cold, withering away into death, including constriction, is more prominent than that of constriction alone. And Paulinus is somewhat more specific than Sulpicius about how the cure is effected: the half-dead state is turned into its opposite through the 'presence' of God, dispelling the illness — implicitly, caused by demons? — and infusing health through the blessed oil as well as the no doubt gentle touch of the saint's hand.

Earlier, we saw that Paulinus introduces this story by hoping that his speaking faculty might similarly be activated by the saint during the poetic process. The saint's application of blessed oil, then, is a visible 'mystery' — like that of baptism and the Eucharist. The divine Word or Christ acts through the spoken blessing as well as through Martin's touch. And the oil has symbolic value: Eucherius's *Forms of Spiritual Understanding* equates it with 'compassion and the Holy Spirit', as in Psalm 88. 21 (89. 20): 'I shall anoint him with my holy oil.'⁶²

'A Healed Face': The Leper as a Figure of Self

In Sulpicius's story of Martin's kissing the leper, evil is imaged as an oppressive covering of dirt, obscuring and eating away the body and soul. As we saw, the original story consists of only two sentences:

Among the Parisians, in truth, as [Martin] entered the city gate with a large crowd going with him, everyone froze in horror while he kissed and blessed a leper with a horrid face. Cleansed at once of every affliction, [the man] came to the church the following day with a shining skin and gave thanks for the health which he had received.⁶³

Paulinus makes explicit the story's invitation to compassion and its status as a visible parable of purification from sin. After praising the saint's humble mind and 'miseratio prompta' (instant compassion) that rejected no one and loved all, he begins by visualizing the unfortunate man's appearance: 'For a wicked leprosy

⁶¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, II. 487–90, CSEL, 16, p. 53: 'tabuerat consumpta gravi paralytica morbo, | atque omni motu torpentia membra carebant | officiis privata suis. iam carne relictā | spirabat tenuis frigenti in pectore flatus'.

⁶² Eucherius, *Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae*, VII, lines 752–53, CCSL, 66, p. 47.

⁶³ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XVIII. 3–4, SC, 133, p. 292: 'Apud Parisios vero, dum portam civitatis illius magnis secum turbis euntibus introiret, leprosum miserabili facie horrentibus cunctis osculatus est, atque benedixit. Statimque omni malo emundatus, postero die ad ecclesiam veniens nitenti cute gratias pro sanitate, quam receperat, agebat.'

covered someone with a horrendous disease, soiling his whole skin with a covering of spots, and spreading thick drops upon his mutilated body.⁶⁴ Other men, unaware that the same misfortune could have happened to them, had scornfully passed him by. But when the saint entered the Parisian gate,

[Martin] gave the unfortunate man a kiss, and so touched him with his face and his mouth, not fearing to soil his face by such a contact: he pressed upon him with joined lips the sign of peace. The other souls standing around shrank back [in horror]; but the man was overjoyed, for he felt in this touching the benefit of a divine gift: instant health coursing speedily and spreading through his body, and a sudden brightness in his renewed skin.⁶⁵

All this detail and the reference, again, to a physical sensing, this time of the spreading cure, seem to point to the poet's personal experience. It also helps the listener to empathize with the sufferer, thereby re-enacting and sensing the transformational event also in his or her own body. The event is spiritualized when Paulinus adds: 'Would that a similar compassion would touch our illnesses, and that Martin, praying, would wish to expel with his kiss the spots from our miserable heart!'⁶⁶ This, then, is the 'mystery' in the miracle: Martin's kiss of peace and its effect is a visible dynamic image of Christ's saving and cleansing of humankind, spiritually and physically. Paulinus's description explicitly invites the reader/listener to experience it in his heart and body through mentally imaging, and thereby affectively replicating, its effect.⁶⁷ Martin's miracles, then, are visible parables of the 'mysteries' of Christ's salvational truths. Paulinus is doing for Martin's miracles what Sedulius did for Christ's.

The poet concludes this episode on a personal note: if the saint would cleanse his heart,

⁶⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, II. 619–20, CSEL, 16, p. 58; and *Vita Mart.*, II. 621–23, CSEL, 16, p. 58: 'Nam quendam horrendo lepra texerat inproba morbo, | inficiens cunctam macularum tegmine carnem | et spargens densas vitiato in corpore guttas.'

⁶⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, II. 630–36, CSEL, 16, p. 58: 'oscula dat misero, vultu conexus et ore, | nec metuens tali faciem sordescere tactu | inpressit iunctus pacis signacula labris. | obstipuerunt alii animi, gavisus at ille | sensit in adtactu divini munera doni, | et remeare citam raptim per membra salutem, | dispergi et celerem renovata in carne nitorem.'

⁶⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, II. 641–43, CSEL, 16, p. 59: 'utinam nostros similis clementia morbos | tangeret, et miseri maculas depellere cordis | orans tam sancto Martinus vellet ab ore!'

⁶⁷ Cf. McFague, *Speaking in Parables*, pp. 138–42. A hundred years later, Venantius Fortunatus would describe this incident in a similar way; see de Nie, 'Iconic Alchemy', pp. 163–66.

then I would be called back to true peace, and be able to lift a healed face to the holy mysteries [of the Church's liturgy]. For after the loss of my properties, of my earthly inheritance, my hope depends upon the face of the merciful Lord: by renouncing the food of swine, that is, the pleasures of the flesh, I would receive the certain signs of true faith.⁶⁸

His personal situation must have been one which contemporaries could recognize through their own experience with the invasions, and his words seem to indicate that he re-created his life as a celibate priest or bishop of the Church. It is unclear what is meant by 'signs', a term which as we saw he uses to mean miracles.⁶⁹ He may have understood his grandson's cure to be one of the 'signs' for which he hoped. But it could also have been an inner sensing of a spiritual purification, like the one he describes in the leper after Martin's kiss.

'A Swift Whirlwind': Discerning and Overcoming Demonic Patterns

Paulinus also adds details about Martin's perceptions of diabolic and demonic patterns in the possessed. When the saint left the monastery across the river to go to the church in the city to exorcize the possessed persons there, 'grace, having preceded him in a hasty, rapid flight, tortured the trembling spectres in their captured bodies'.⁷⁰ The spiritual power is here almost a visible stream of energy. The spiritual/affective patterns we see in the possessed's behaviour are those of *constriction, inversion, lack of contact with the ground, and an utter emptiness*. Thus, as soon as Martin entered the church precincts and the guilty spirits felt their judge and punishment arriving,

it could be seen that, the [possessed's] members having suddenly been *pulled upwards*, their *fettered* bodies were carried aloft by airy chains, and bodies of heavy flesh *tottering* through the *emptiness*, leaving behind the touching of the ground by a swift *whirlwind*. *Hung up* by their torture, but free from bonds, chained by the merits of prayer, but hanging through

⁶⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, II. 644–49, CSEL, 16, p. 59: 'Tum credo ad verae revocarer gaudia pacis, | sanatum ad tollens sancta ad mysteria vultum, | et post eversum, dederat quem portio, censum | spes mea clementis domini penderet ab ore, | porcorumque escas linquens vel gaudia carnis | acciperem verae signacula certa fidei.'

⁶⁹ As in Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 869, CSEL, 16, p. 138: 'verba silent sed signa nitent'.

⁷⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 407–08, CSEL, 16, p. 121: 'gratia sic rapido propere praegressa volatu | torqueret trepidas captivo in corpore larvas'.

their own punishments, they shouted and confessed their guilt before the silent judge.⁷¹
(emphasis added)

As already indicated, the 'punishments' of the demons — in the bodies of the possessed — in the presence of a 'judge' appear to reflect Roman judicial torture.⁷² While Martin lay prostrated on the ground, praying,

the guilty one was hanging in *emptiness*, the torturer in the air with *feet turned upwards*, clothed with *constricting*, stiffened robes that clung to his *cramped* members, without crumpling or falling down to bare the shameful parts of the hanging body.⁷³ (emphasis added)

An image of a whirlwind is now combined with those of emptiness, constriction, and physical inversion. The latter is clearly a poetical exaggeration to express a state of mind, already described by Sulpicius and other authors.⁷⁴ All of this insanity is going nowhere, and that is the point. Elsewhere, Paulinus casually describes the whole world as a whirlwind.⁷⁵ Only the stable Martin, whose prostrated body position is the inverse of his groundedness in heaven, gets things done; at the end of his rendering of Sulpicius's stories, Paulinus tells the saint: 'you were able to compress all the rage of the Cruel One and the whole fury of the demon into [that of] a small fly'.⁷⁶

The demonic and diabolic apparitions to Martin are not miracles, but Paulinus's treatment of them tells us something more about his treatment of images of destructive energies. As we saw, Sulpicius had pointed to the 'mystery of evil [...] in false powers, signs and prodigies' (mentioned in an apocalyptic context in II Thessalonians 2. 7 and 9) as the working in his time of 'diverse figures of evil'.⁷⁷ Paulinus does not use this term and omits the apocalyptic context altogether, but

⁷¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 414–20, CSEL, 16, pp. 121–22: 'Cernere erat raptis propere ad sublimia membris | constricta aëriis attolli vinclis, | et per inane gravis nutantia pondera carnis | linquere contiguas pernici turbine terras, | supplicio suspensa suo, sed libera nexu, | vincta precum meritis, propriis pendencia poenis | clamare admissas tacito sub iudice culpas.'

⁷² Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 108.

⁷³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 428–32, CSEL, 16, p. 122: 'Inter inane reus pendens et in aëre tortor | porrectis sursum pedibus, constricta rigentis | vellera vestitus tectis haerentia membris, | ne flexo curvata su vel lapsa retrorsum | nudarent turpes adpensi corporis artus.'

⁷⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 6. 4, SC, 510, p. 312; Jerome, *Epist.* 108. 13, CSEL, 55, p. 323, lines 2–7; and Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, XXIII. 65–68, CSEL, 30, p. 196.

⁷⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 693, CSEL, 16, p. 132: 'turb[o] mundi'.

⁷⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 860–61, CSEL, 16, p. 138: 'cunctam rabiem diri totumque furorem | daemonis in parvam potuisti adstringere muscam'.

⁷⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXI. 1, SC, 133, p. 298: 'diversa[e] figura[e] nequitiae'.

the demonic and diabolic apparitions to Martin receive a great deal of attention. Dominant images are: ‘ingenii [...] figmenta dolosi’ (figment of treacherous deceit), ‘mentit[us] gurg[es]’ (lying whirlpool-abyss), ‘cava nub[s]’ (hollow cloud), and ‘furor’ (frenzy).⁷⁸ When the apparition of the imperially attired Devil had vanished into thin air, Paulinus comes close to naming this apparition’s quality of nothingness as an endless falling into a swallowing abyss — an image of a true existential experience that many people might acknowledge as somehow familiar through dreams.⁷⁹ It is associated with and effected by a worship of self or vanity (*vanitas*) (emphatically imaged, but not named) that is in fact a bottomless emptiness. We see that the saint is said to be stable and powerful through his assimilation to God or Christ, in Paulinus’s repeated epithet for Martin: ‘mens plena deo’ (mind filled with God).⁸⁰ As was clearly visible in the behaviour and subsequent cure of the possessed, and in the Devil’s inability to possess the saint himself, these injurious patterns can enter only into an empty space; if it is firmly filled with the stability of ‘good power’, they are held at bay.⁸¹

‘The Seeing of Martin Outdoes All Medicaments’: Conforming to the Image?

Sulpicius’s story of Martin’s friend Evanthius’s illness shows how the saint’s promise to come to him could initiate the healing process at a distance.⁸² Paulinus seems to point intentionally to it as having been set in motion through what was in fact a mental image. Sulpicius, through his interlocutor Gallus, had reported only that Evanthius was mortally ill and had called for Martin, and that before the saint was halfway to his house, ‘the sick man felt [Martin’s] power coming to him, at once received back his health, and himself came out to meet us’.⁸³ Paulinus begins by telling us that although Evanthius was a grandee in the secular world, his faith was pure and his heart benign.

⁷⁸ Respectively, Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 344, 356, 362, and 363, CSEL, 16, pp. 76–77.

⁷⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 409, CSEL, 16, p. 79. Bachelard, *La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté*, pp. 343–56. Cf. de Nie, ‘Images of Invisible Dynamics’, pp. 52–64.

⁸⁰ As in Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 146, 297; and IV. 275, CSEL, 16, pp. 24, 31, 92, respectively.

⁸¹ See Angenendt, ‘Die Liturgie und die Organisation des kirchlichen’.

⁸² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 96–121, CSEL, 16, p. 85.

⁸³ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 2. 3, SC, 510, pp. 222–24: ‘virtutem advenientis sentit aegrotus, receptaque continuo sanitate venientibus nobis obviam ipse processit’.

His illness, described in some detail, sounds very much like pneumonia: a violent fever, much coughing, and difficult respiration — through his dry mouth and glutinous saliva he could scarcely talk. After a supreme effort, he finally managed to ask for Martin, saying that 'renovanda ad tempora vitae, | Martini aspectum cunctas superare medelas' (to give back his [earthly] life, [for] the seeing of Martin outdoes all medicaments).⁸⁴ However,

his pious wish was not slow in being realized. He believed in the signs [of improvement] which he [had] hoped for as being given by divine beneficence. That faith was enough. Very soon the outcome itself too proved [its truth]. [Martin] had hardly come half of the way (a long stretch of road remained), but grace went ahead of his journeying. His swift power moving ahead of his slow limbs, he sent ahead the gifts of the hoped-for health. When the healed man met the doctor, they congratulated each other with the transmission of the heart's health into the healed body — for the cure of the flesh had been hastened by the merits of his faith.⁸⁵

What we seem to see here is Evanthius's expecting, and therewith mentally imaging, of the saint already curing him. With this, belief 'opened his veins' to the process and his body began to conform itself to this powerful image of spiritual vitality. At the same time, the travelling Martin is likely to have indeed directed his prayer and his blessing towards him, and there is modern evidence that prayer at a distance can achieve effects.⁸⁶ The last sentence indicates Paulinus's awareness of this interaction: he says explicitly that the body's health is a reflection of that of the heart — an insight, as we saw, gaining ground in today's mind-body medicine.⁸⁷

'The True Beauty of his Heart' 'Surpassing All Miracles'

What Paulinus attempts to induce in his readers and listeners, then, is a Christlike empathy and compassion instead of a blind admiration for holy power or for the miraculous as such — perhaps the thought behind his referring to 'seducing' the

⁸⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 110–11, CSEL, 16, p. 85.

⁸⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 112–21, CSEL, 16, pp. 85–86: 'Nec tardat iustum saltim dilatio votum. | credidit optatis divino munere signis | hanc satis esse fidem. mox et res ipsa probavit. | vixdum vel medii transcurta parte laboris | (restabat pars magna viae) praevenerit euntem | gratia. praemisit speratae dona salutis | praecedens tardos virtus perniciores artus. | occurrit validus medico. gratantur uterque | corpore sanato transfusam in corda salutem, | dum fidei meritis crescat curatio carnis.'

⁸⁶ Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity*, p. 162.

⁸⁷ As is argued, with many case histories, by Chopra, *Quantum Healing*.

people with (stories about) miracles. Instead of tracing the formation of an apostolic man of power, comparable to a shaman, Paulinus wants us to see a saint who above all empathizes with others and helps them through letting himself be a conduit for divine power. Martin's 'charities' are in fact presented as the greater, spiritual, miracles.

A comparison of Sulpicius's original story of Martin's first and best-known act, of his sharing his cloak with a naked beggar in the wintry cold, with Paulinus's rendering of it shows how the poet amplified his material to appeal even more strongly to the reader's compassion. As we saw, Sulpicius's original story is beautifully, but relatively briefly, told. During an unusually severe winter in which not a few people froze to death, Martin encountered a naked beggar at the gate of Amiens, and

although he beseeched passers-by to have pity upon him, everyone walked straight past the wretched man. Since others did not show him pity, the man filled with God understood that this [naked] man was reserved for him. What was he to do, however? He had only the soldier's mantle which he was wearing; his other clothes had been given away earlier. Seizing the sword which he was wearing, therefore, he cut his mantle in two pieces and gave one half to the poor man and wrapped the rest around himself. Upon this, some of the bystanders began to laugh at the sight of his truncated costume. Many, however, healthier in mind, began to sigh deeply, regretting that they had not done this since, having more than Martin, they could have clothed the poor man without reducing themselves to nakedness.⁸⁸

The following night, Christ, wearing the half which had been given away, appeared in a dream to Martin, and he honoured the young soldier by saying to the angels standing around that, although still a catechumen, Martin had covered him with it; the reader is then reminded that Christ here repeats his saying that everything done for the poor was done for him.⁸⁹ This vision did not make the saint proud, Sulpicius concludes; recognizing God's goodness in his deed, he sought baptism. We have surmised earlier that, for Martin himself, this vision may have been something like a shaman's call by his 'guardian spirit' to a new life of service.

⁸⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 1–2, SC, 133, pp. 256–58: 'Qui cum praetereuntes ut sui miserentur oraret omnesque miserum praeterirent, intellexit vir Deo plenus sibi illum, aliis misericordiam non praestantibus, reservari. Quid tamen ageret? Nihil praeter chlamydem, qua indutus erat, habebat: iam enim reliqua in opus simile consumpserat. Arrepto itaque ferro quo accinctus erat, mediam dividit partemque eius pauperi tribuit, reliqua rursus induitur. Interea de circumstantibus ridere nonnulli, quia deformis esse truncatus habitu videretur; multi tamen, quibus erat mens sanior, altius gemere, quod nihil simile fecissent, cum utique plus habentes vestire pauperem sine sua nuditate potuissent.'

⁸⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 3–4, SC, 133, p. 258.

Paulinus’s version is a poetic meditation, but also a sermon. He amplifies, sometimes perhaps a bit too much, adding details that appeal to emotion and making the story twice as long. The naked beggar, for instance, is said to have been ‘hardly able to murmur a few disconnected words’;⁹⁰ we hear this as we visualize his half-frozen condition and extreme shivering. The rich who bypassed him, ‘looked down upon his disdained complaint with an insane laugh’.⁹¹ Martin’s agonizing hesitation thereupon takes much longer than in Sulpicius’s original: the listener is implicitly invited to share it. Paulinus then explains what Sulpicius had perhaps assumed to be common knowledge at his time, namely that his soldier’s mantle was folded double, protecting him against cold, wind, and rain. Realizing that this double quality was the solution, Martin took his sword and

in abounding compassion (*miseratio prodiga*) cut [the mantle] in two parts, as I believe himself keeping the lesser one and covering the shivering body [of the beggar] with the other. [...] O blessed man, surpassing all miracles with your virtue (*virtute tua miracula vincens omnia*), and going beyond the precepts and commands of our Lord! For he ordered us to be content with little and not to keep two sets of clothes. You, however, had only one and divided it into two. Everyone witnessed this; some laughed at the mutilated mantle, not perceiving the greater truth: the true beauty of his heart (*veru[s] in corde decor*). But others felt contrite in their hearts upon seeing the justice of a poor man giving to the beggar what their larger means, despite its great resources, had denied him.⁹²

Three key phrases — none of which appear in Sulpicius’s original — point to Paulinus’s new message here and in his whole poem: the saint’s ‘abounding compassion’ and the fact that ‘the true beauty of his heart’ ‘surpasses all miracles’. Not Martin’s deed or his holy power, then, but his tenderhearted, active compassion is itself the real miracle. Paulinus’s sensitivity to suffering and compassion is likely to have been connected with the misfortunes which he and those around him suffered during the Visigothic takeover of south-western Gaul, where he lived, and with what he

⁹⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 64–65, CSEL, 16, p. 21: ‘Vix verba frementi | dimidians prae fracta sono’.

⁹¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 67–68, CSEL, 16, p. 21: ‘fastiditamque querellam | despexit misero locupletum insania risu’.

⁹² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 87–89, 91–99, CSEL, 16, pp. 92–93: ‘Mediam resecat miseratio prodiga partem, | peiorem sibi credo legens. tum membra trementis | obtegit [...] o felix, virtute tua miracula vincens | omnia et excedens domini praecepta iubentis. | ille etenim modico contentos nos iubet esse | nec servare duas vestes: tu dividis unam. | aspicunt omnes. alii deformia rident | tegmina nec cernunt verum in corde decorem. | ast alii secum compuncto corde queruntur | iustitiam potuisse inopis decernere egenti. | divite quod censu substantia larga negasset.’

appears to have experienced as succours by the saint.⁹³ Gregory the Great's late sixth-century prose stories about contemporary Italian saints — many of whom lived in monastic environments — would also emphasize their spiritual rather than visible prowess, but not focus specifically upon compassion.⁹⁴ The Pope's contemporary Gregory of Tours, however, would occasionally point to this as the outstanding quality of the heavenly Martin's present miracles.⁹⁵

In his rendering of Martin's dream, Paulinus confronts the reader/listener with an inversion, a cue to the entering of a suprarational kind of consciousness, 'an enlightened perception', when he addresses the halved soldier's mantle as 'vere pretiosa clamis' (a truly precious mantle),⁹⁶ and adds that such an honour has never been given to garments of purple silk embroidered with images by gold threads — a current ideal of costume beauty.⁹⁷ This image slides over that of the probably soiled soldier's cloak and covers it with a glowing sheen, intensified by the association with the no doubt shining heavenly Christ wearing it. It becomes the spiritual image of an earthly object, glorified through a heavenly compassion. With this and, as will be seen, other inversions — perhaps influenced by Sedulius's habitual inversions — and with what might be described as *double-exposure images*, I suggest, Paulinus wants to prod the reader into a change of awareness, a leaving behind of more or less distanced common-sense perception to enter into an affective, imaginative one: that of seeing the heart's spiritual reality as transparent images overlying and permeating visible appearances.

After reminding his readers that they own nothing anyway because God created and owns all that one has and gives and mentioning Martin's 'virtus vicina Deo' (virtue [bringing him] close to God) in his attributing everything to him, Paulinus reiterates another one of his favourite views: because 'augent visa fidem' (things seen make faith grow), the vision made Martin seek baptism.⁹⁸ However, the poet believes, he tells us, that the Holy Spirit had already entered this very young man

⁹³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione nepotuli sui*, 78–80, CSEL, 16, p. 164.

⁹⁴ Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, SC, 251, 260, 265.

⁹⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Virtutes sancti Martini*, II. 2, MGH SSrM, I. 2, p. 610: 'Fecit hoc virtus antestitis, quae saepe miseris opem *proflua miseratione* tribuit et infirmis medicamenta largitur' (emphasis added) (it was the power of the bishop [Martin] that did this, which often, with overflowing compassion grants solace to the miserable and healing to the sick).

⁹⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 107, CSEL, 16, p. 23.

⁹⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 107–10, CSEL, 16, p. 23.

⁹⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 117, 122–24, CSEL, 16, pp. 23–24.

before that time, just as the apostle Peter had once recognized it in another soldier (the centurion Cornelius).⁹⁹ Instead of Sulpicius's short and trenchant story, then, we are given an imaged meditation on the spiritual realities in the various elements and aspects of the event, intended to inspire us to empathize with the beggar and to imitate the compassionate saint. We shall see compassion (*miseratio*) or its equivalents explicitly mentioned in a number of other miracle stories as well.

Sulpicius's somewhat more detailed story of Martin's second recorded gift of his own clothing to a shivering beggar as followed by the appearance of an ethereal flame above the saint's head¹⁰⁰ is treated in a similar manner: the poet again brings in the notion of 'invisible' beauty, but now manifested as light. Thus we are told that during another winter Martin, now bishop — 'invasit totum miseratio sensum' (wholly overcome by compassion) — gave away the tunic or undershirt he wore under his liturgical vestment to another naked beggar because the archdeacon who had been asked to provide it for the poor man had forgotten to do so. When the archdeacon later came to remind him that the church service was about to begin, Paulinus again adds to the text and lets Martin remind him of his request and of the primacy of compassion: 'the doctrine of the holy prophet must be carried out; compassion precedes the celebration of Mass; this is the most pleasing offer. Carry out his commandments, and first clothe the naked!'¹⁰¹ Angrily, the archdeacon hastily bought a rough tunic, as he thought for a poor man who was no longer there, and threw it at his bishop's feet. Paulinus tells us that Saint Martin was delighted (*congaudens*)¹⁰² to put on that humble garment himself, under his episcopal vestment.

Then the poet adds more mental images that do not occur in Sulpicius's original, which describes only the visible events. Proceeding in this way to the altar, Paulinus writes, 'multo comptior heros hoc habitu' (the hero was much more beautiful through this attire), like the sweaty, dirty soldier returning to his king after a successful battle.¹⁰³ Again an inversion and a double exposure. The images are congruent: Martin had been a soldier, every Christian fights in Christ's service, as the

⁹⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 129–30, CSEL, 16, p. 24; cf. Acts 10.

¹⁰⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 1–2, SC, 510, pp. 214–22.

¹⁰¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 68–70, CSEL, 16, p. 84: 'implenda est sancti doctrina prophetarum. | praecedat missam miseratio. gratior haec est | hostia. mandatum faciens prius obtege nudum'.

¹⁰² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 78, CSEL, 16, p. 84.

¹⁰³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 79–81, CSEL, 16, p. 84.

saint elsewhere admonishes an ex-soldier,¹⁰⁴ and Christ was regarded as the real King. Paulinus explains:

He was more beautiful through this honour the more the ugliness of his body was repulsive. For the substance of his virtue preceded and outlasted its visible appearance, as the strength of a root outlasts the time of its leaves. A [heavenly] interpretation (*coniectura*) that could not be doubted soon made visible [the existence of] this delight of his heart. For while he gathered the pious gifts during the solemn request, and then pronounced the immortal prayers through sacred words, a glowing flame shone from his bright head, enveloping it with splendour but not hurting his hair; it reached out and extended itself upwards in a luminous flowing, a brightness making its way through the air with a fiery furrow.¹⁰⁵

The halo and its flaming path to heaven, then, is a visible manifestation of how Martin's invisible beauty of heart connects him with heaven; in the next sentence, Paulinus speaks of it as though it also manifested his 'glory'. As we saw, a fiery phenomenon had also been observed around praying monks in the contemporary east.¹⁰⁶ In the Old Testament, however, ethereal fire was associated with divine glory.¹⁰⁷ The image of a tree, the well-known symbol of the Tree of Life and of the Cross as its newer continuation (as we saw, another central Christian inversion), points indirectly to the saint's total assimilation to the crucified Christ, which both Sulpicius and Paulinus stress.¹⁰⁸

To continue with the theme of invisible beauty, predictably Paulinus amplifies less in his rendering of Sulpicius's one-sentence description of the ex-prefect Arborius's vision of heavenly jewels on Martin's cuff while consecrating the Eucharist¹⁰⁹ — a perception that points to the visual concept of a jewelled heavenly court; he writes:

¹⁰⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 594–639, CSEL, 16, pp. 104–05.

¹⁰⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 82–91, CSEL, 16, pp. 84–85: 'Pulchrior hoc titulis, quo membris turpior oris. | nam speciem virtutis opus praecedit, ut altae | radices robor foliorum tempora transit. | nec dubia hoc votum mox coniectura probavit. | nam dum sollempni cumulat pia dona rogatu | prosequiturque sacris vota immortalia verbis, | offulsit rutilans claro de vertice flamma, | splendorem capiti infundens, innoxia crini, | perspicuo sursum porrecta atque edita tractu, | ignifluo liquidum perrumpens aëra sulco.'

¹⁰⁶ See Daniélou, 'Feuersäule (Lichtsäule, Wolkensäule)', col. 189.

¹⁰⁷ See Aalen, 'Glory, Honour. Doxa. Time'.

¹⁰⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXIV. 4–8, SC, 133, pp. 306–08. On the larger context, see Klauser, 'Baum des Lebens'.

¹⁰⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 10. 6, SC, 510, p. 328.

Arborius saw Martin's shining and sparkling hand flashing with the light of jewels while he offered the holy Mass to God: his flaming right hand clothed with precious beauty, and the clatter of stones colliding. Such gems do not decorate the standards of princes, nor surround the diademed heads of kings; but at the end [of the world], the judgement of the Lord will insert such deserved jewels in the bright crowns of the saints.¹¹⁰

Whereas Sulpicius's original had established only an anticipatory, oblique connection in the preceding sentence by mentioning Martin's manifesting Christ's working in him through 'diversarum munera gratiarum' (the gifts of various graces),¹¹¹ Paulinus makes the connection explicit by explaining in the next sentence that the jewels are spiritual images of the saint's shining virtues:

It is not to be doubted that, on account of his outstanding purity of faith, he flashed with the various flowers of virtue in a more than human manner — he who, as the happy page of the historical book [i.e. Sulpicius's *Dialogues*] testifies, deserved to be comforted at close hand by angelic words.¹¹²

In contemporary poetry, jewels, flowers, and virtues were well-known synonyms.¹¹³ Paulinus is careful, however, to make his saint appear to be the opposite of beautiful in a sensory, this-worldly mode — the latter had been a quality of the pagan gods. His verse attempts to communicate a kind of beauty that is only indirectly manifested in visible things, and which — as Augustine had said¹¹⁴ — can be recognized only by those whose hearts are already tuned into the wavelength of the object of their vision, as it were. Paulinus's overtly spiritualized version of the stories of Martin's life and deeds appears to be intended to bring the reader into this state of awareness.

¹¹⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 700–08, CSEL, 16, p. 132: 'Arborius vidit fulgentum luce micantem | gemmarum, dum sancta deo sollemnia defert, | Martini rutilasse manum lumenque coruscum | vestire ignitam pretioso murice dextram | et conlisorum lapidum crepitare fragorem. | non tales vexilla ducum pinxere lapilli, | talia nec frontes regum diademata cingunt, | sed quales claris sanctorum in fine coronis | inserit emeritas domini sententia gemmas.'

¹¹¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 10. 5, SC, 510, p. 326.

¹¹² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 709–12, CSEL, 16, p. 132: 'Nec dubium quin praecipuae probitate fidei | ultra hominem vario virtutum flore coruscet, | quem coram angelici meritum solacia verbi | historici felix testatur pagina libri.' An angel comforted Martin in Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 13. 4, SC, 510, p. 342 = Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 720–24, CSEL, 16, p. 133.

¹¹³ Elsewhere, the poet refers to Martin as 'aeternae speculum virtutis' (Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 688, CSEL, 16, p. 131).

¹¹⁴ Augustine, *Epist.* 147. xvii. 44, CSEL, 44, p. 318.

Whereas Sulpicius had pointed to Martin's visible actions as indicating that the saint's holy way of life had everything to do with his being constantly joined in spirit to the heavenly Christ, Paulinus, also emphasizing this,¹¹⁵ elaborates upon the inversional contrast between the visible and the invisible dimensions. As already indicated, he visualizes it through another recurring double-exposure image: that of the saint's mind rising to or already living in heaven while his body remains on earth. Thus he writes not only, echoing Sulpicius, that Martin's mind was filled with God, but also that 'coelesti in sede manebat' (he already lived in heaven), and that during prayer his 'mens ad sidera transit' (mind travelled to heaven).¹¹⁶ In one description of the saint praying, the poet constructs an extended counterpoint:

Then, rising to heaven with his soul, but prostrate in body, his sacred heart rising aloft, but his limbs close to the ground, his flesh lay motionless, but his mind lived: the mind joined to God rose to heaven, while the pride of the flesh was trodden upon. Thus two dissimilar ways were brought into agreement by one act; thus humility hastens to the place where faith has preceded her.¹¹⁷

Elsewhere the poet describes the saint's detachment from mundane affairs in the metaphor of the body, saying that the saint's body had 'nil corporeum' (nothing corporeal) and that he seemed to be 'sine pondere carnis' (unobstructed by the weight of the flesh).¹¹⁸ Here, the Neoplatonist preference for transcendence seems to be somewhat stronger than the decision to see the holy in the body. To 'ascend' to the heavenly consciousness, Paulinus is attempting to show, one must completely humble one's self-will and self-consciousness and open one's heart in trust to the dynamics of a larger reality. It is a description of an altered, non-common-sense, state of mind — almost certainly that which the poet had also described as his own new kind of awareness — and an invitation for the reader, as in the inscription, to enter this beneficial state as well.

¹¹⁵ As in Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XXVII. 1, SC, 133, p. 314: 'Numquam in illius ore nisi Christus' (he never spoke of anything other than Christ). E.g. Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 80, 467, and 615, CSEL, 16, pp. 110, 123, and 129.

¹¹⁶ Respectively, Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, III. 1, SC, 133, p. 256 ('vir Deo plenus') and Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 146 and 297, and IV. 275, CSEL, 16, pp. 24, 31, 92; and Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, I. 297 and II. 185, CSEL, 16, pp. 31 and 42.

¹¹⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 77–82, CSEL, 16, p. 110: 'Tum sublimi animo erectus, sed corpore pronus, | sursum cor statuens, sed membra deorsum, | carne iacet, sed mente viget. conscendit in altum | mens coniuncta deo, premitur iactantia carnis. | sic via dissimilis consensu adiungitur actu, | sic humiles properant quo praecessere fideles.'

¹¹⁸ Respectively, Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 149 and 423, CSEL, 16, pp. 68 and 80.

'The Splendour of his Heart Bringing Forth that of his Face': The Saint Himself Visualized

Paulinus also significantly adds to Sulpicius's original by letting what he calls Martin's 'beauty of heart' shine forth in his face during the confrontations with his opposite, the then often cruel secular authorities. Most of these contacts would have been in his function as bishop which, all but passed over in Sulpicius's original, is now described in positive terms.¹¹⁹ The descriptions of these confrontations are among the longest sections in the poem, indicating the importance which the poet attached to them. But he has inserted a new image in all of them: Martin's face. Thus the aligned horses of the fiscal chariot are spooked, not as Sulpicius had said by Martin's flowing black mantle, but by his 'venerable face' — reminding of the prophet Balaam's mule halting before an angel in his path.¹²⁰ And in the middle of the night the cruel Count Avitianus was frightened into acceding to the saint's request to release his prisoners, not as Sulpicius had said, by 'the manifestation of so great a power' (being the fact that an angel had been sent to wake him), but by 'the bishop, shining with his bright face, manifesting the nobility of his merits through his holy face', 'dispersing the shadows of the horrid night'.¹²¹ Sulpicius's 'power' is now presented as a radiation of holiness. Paulinus adds that the saint's presence so frightened the hordes of demons going about their usual nocturnal crimes that they stopped doing them.¹²²

Paulinus's description of Martin's encounter with the usurper Emperor Maximus, however, is the most explicit about the appearance of the saint's face. Sulpicius's story of this incident had been sparsely worded. After Maximus had succeeded in more or less persuading him that he had accepted the ostensibly God-given power unwillingly, Martin finally agreed to attend an imperial dinner; how the whole scene looked is left to the reader's imagination.¹²³ The Emperor had been described as 'a man of fierce pride who was elated by his victory in the civil wars',

¹¹⁹ See Labarre, *Le Manteau partagé*, pp. 215–16, 221–32; and Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 14–28. Cf. Fontaine, 'Hagiographie et politique'.

¹²⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, II. 3. 2, SC, 510, p. 226; Paulinus of Périgieux, *Vita Mart.*, IV. 176–77, 180–82, CSEL, 16, p. 88. Numbers 22. 21–31.

¹²¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 4. 5, SC, 510, p. 304. Paulinus of Périgieux, *Vita Mart.*, V. 359–60, 368, CSEL, 16, p. 120: 'obfuit claro venerabilis ore sacerdos, | ostentans sancto virtutum stemmata vultu. | [...] tetrae dirumpens nubila noctis'. Cf. Numbers 22. 22.

¹²² Paulinus of Périgieux, *Vita Mart.*, V. 322–23, CSEL, 16, p. 118.

¹²³ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XX. 1–4, SC, 133, pp. 294–96.

the other bishops behaved in an adulatory manner as ‘clients of the emperor’, and Martin was the only one in whom ‘apostolic authority’ remained, and in requesting certain things he commanded more than he asked.¹²⁴ A sober account follows of how Martin surprised everyone by passing the drinking cup, after blessing it, first to his attendant priest, instead of to the Emperor, as the latter had expected, and how everyone including the Emperor then admired him for this.¹²⁵ The message here acted out is, of course, that bishops and clergy possess an independent, divine authority that is higher than that of a secular ruler. At the end of the story, Sulpicius matter-of-factly tells us that Martin foretold the events of the Emperor’s life.

In Paulinus’s version, Maximus’s dinner is one of the five longest stories (135 lines) in the poem. The poet expands upon the ruler’s bad qualities, adding a depraved nature, a proud heart, and ‘tumid[us] [...] patron[us]’ (an inflated patron).¹²⁶ After further elaboration upon the ruler’s bad qualities, Paulinus describes the saint’s independence over against the fawning bishops.¹²⁷ To put the other bishops’ adulatory behaviour into perspective, a list of a good bishop’s duties, absent in Sulpicius’s original, is given.¹²⁸ Because of its many suggestions in this direction, Paulinus’s poem can also be read as a ‘mirror’ or book of advice for bishops. And whereas Sulpicius had not described the surroundings, Paulinus gives his aristocratic readers a picture that they may have recognized: high civil and military officials reclining on golden couches covered with rich purple tapestries.¹²⁹ Martin’s contrasting appearance is then described: instead of reclining, he is sitting on a low stool at the Emperor’s right, with

his holy face, like that of Moses when he descended from the top of the sacred mountain, bringing back the sacred laws — a face transformed, flashing with exceeding brightness, the splendour of his heart bringing forth that of his face, so that the veil [covering it] could not hide the new light.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XX. 1, SC, 133, p. 294.

¹²⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XX. 5–7, SC, 133, pp. 296–98.

¹²⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 16, 17, 31, CSEL, 16, pp. 63, 64.

¹²⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 32–33, CSEL, 16, p. 64.

¹²⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 20–25, CSEL, 16, p. 63.

¹²⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 77–78, CSEL, 16, pp. 65–66.

¹³⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 80–84, CSEL, 16, p. 66: ‘Qualis pia iura reportans | descendit sacro montis de vertice Moyses, | mutati vultus nimio fulgore coruscans, | cum faciem cordis splendor depromeret oris | nec cohibere novam possent velamina lucem’.

We see here an actualization of not only the model of an Old Testament prophet before the king, but also that of Moses as transmitter of the heavenly laws (Exodus 34. 29, 33). Thereupon, however, Paulinus somewhat surprisingly proceeds to give the reader a very elaborate description of the sensory beauty of the whole scene after all: the textiles hanging as curtains, the mosaics of the floor, the jewel-studded or engraved crystal vases, and the colours of the wine in them; upon golden dishes, the exotic and luxurious products of the air, the forest, the earth, and the sea. Why all this? Only for aesthetic delight? Late antique writers competed in producing dazzling descriptions like this.¹³¹ As we saw, in the brief preface to this third book, Paulinus had indeed written that he hopes that if his poetry will not be able to say great things, it will at least say 'delightful things'.¹³² Is this all that he is doing here? After the incident of the cup, however, Paulinus makes the point that 'the merit of the heart, not the emperor's purple, conquered; the diadem ceded to the faith of the prelate'.¹³³ Then he bursts out in exuberant praise, and we see why we were treated to the long aesthetic description:

Fear did not conquer Martin's firmness, neither did charm, the efforts of his dinner partner, or the anger of the powerful overcome his righteousness. O virtue so close to God, by thus removing your heart [from your situation] you are as though far away, conquering the [seductions of] the present world!¹³⁴

A firm withdrawal of the heart, then, from earthly appearances, even as seductively delightful as this, makes Martin invincible. It is again the different, divine, kind of beauty in his heart, now manifested in his shining face, that matters. And the way in which Paulinus thereupon explains Martin's prophecies to the Emperor shows something of the author's notion of the human self; he says that 'cuncta ut puro vidit mens ignea sensu' (his fiery mind saw all through his pure consciousness).¹³⁵ In other words, the saint's interior beauty includes an openness to the perception of timeless spiritual reality.

¹³¹ Cf. Roberts, *Jeweled Style*.

¹³² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 8, CSEL, 16, p. 63: 'grandia si nequit effari, vel suavia dicet'.

¹³³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 123–24, CSEL, 16, p. 67: 'meritum cordis, non purpura regis | vicit. praelatae cessit diadema fidei'.

¹³⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 131–34, CSEL, 16, p. 68: 'Non terror vicit firmum, non gratia iustum, | non convivantis studium, non ira potentis. | o virtus vicina deo, sic corde remoto, | sis velut ipse procul, praesentem vincere mundum.'

¹³⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, III. 140, CSEL, 16, p. 68.

Paulinus was evidently not acquainted with Sulpicius's letters about the fire and the saint's death and funeral.¹³⁶ At the end of book five, he has completed his versification of Sulpicius's stories and sends the saint off, as it were, to 'astrigera domu[s]' (the starry home) he deserves.¹³⁷ Until he returns with his new heavenly body, the poet continues, people will venerate the one he left behind, for 'You have been able to hide only your face from us; your deeds of compassion remain with us'.¹³⁸ I would suggest, however, that, with his images of Martin's angelic and prophet-like face in the strategic places we have just seen, Paulinus has tried to make the compassionate saint come to life again as a visible presence in his readers' or listeners' 'eyes of the heart'. Resembling the luminous face of the heavenly Christ as described in Revelation 1. 14, Martin's holy face, when interiorly contemplated, could also have been experienced as transmitting or releasing and stimulating a vitalizing, healing energy, as it did for Martin's friend Evanthius, who had said that 'seeing Martin outdoes all medicaments'.¹³⁹ One is reminded of the Uzalians' experiences of Saint Stephen's face. There is no indication, however, that Paulinus was acquainted with their stories.

*'Overflowing Yet Remaining Full': The Oil Story Updated*¹⁴⁰

Paulinus's beginning his version of the story of the oil increasing through Martin's blessing not by saying, as Sulpicius had done, that it is of little consequence, but by insisting that it is 'a fact in truth no less to be admired' than the cure of the paralysed girl in Trier through the oil which he has just described,¹⁴¹ seems to point to his recognizing its symbolic value. For the oil can be understood as becoming an image of the saint's mediation of Christ's compassionate healing of everyone's sins and illnesses. Perhaps to suggest this, Paulinus amplifies and places the story in the perspective of a by then worldwide practice accessing Christ's compassion. Thus

¹³⁶ Sulpicius, *Epist.* 1–3, SC, 133, pp. 316–44.

¹³⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 859, CSEL, 16, p. 138.

¹³⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 865–66, CSEL, 16, p. 138: 'Vix solum a nobis potuisti abscondere vultum, | Nobiscum pietate manens'.

¹³⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, iv. 111, CSEL, 16, p. 85.

¹⁴⁰ As indicated earlier, I have discussed Sulpicius's and Paulinus's versions of this story in my 'Configurations of Miracle'.

¹⁴¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 3. 1, SC, 510, p. 296; Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 101, CSEL, 16, p. 111: 'nec sane alterius minor admiratio facti est'.

he introduces it with an elaborate report of a contemporary custom in both east and west of bringing oil to be blessed for healing either by living holy men or by putting it in places sanctified by religion, through Christ's having been there, or through which the power of a martyr works.¹⁴² In the west, as we saw, the former custom had existed at least since the fourth century: Paulinus of Nola had reported liquid unguent being poured on St Felix's tomb to be retrieved for medical purposes,¹⁴³ and in the early fifth century Augustine had mentioned the revival of an apparently dead man through anointing with the 'eiusdem martyris oleo' (oil of the martyr [Stephen]).¹⁴⁴

Paulinus then lists the places sacred through Christ's presence: the place of his birth, the site of his crucifixion, his tomb, and the spot from which he ascended to heaven after his resurrection. In such places, he writes, do people in the region place flasks of oil, 'to be altered through the nectar of dew pouring in from on high, through which heavenly grace flows into the holy liquid'.¹⁴⁵ Then, in a remarkable passage, Paulinus proceeds to explain how people in places far away from the Holy Land can access this grace in the same manner:

believing that the Lord is not confined by the boundaries of places, and that his works of mercy transgress all limits, they request the real gifts of the present Lord with an unhesitating faith — the Lord who, on account of the powerful deed/miracle of his compassion (*pro virtute favoris*), does not resist for a long time the prayers of those coming to him: for he comes to and touches those praying everywhere; he does not avoid those who delay, although he is closer to those who hasten, and their attempt alone [to make the journey in the mind] is [equivalent to] the reaching of their [physical] destination.

Those who carry this in their hearts, in whatever region they invoke him, receive the gifts of the Lord, whether they entrust their requests to holy men, or place their [flasks] in whatever places to be sanctified — Christ, although he was not present there with his sacred body, touches it with his power, even though he returned long ago to the highest heaven and reigns there in his [glorified] body.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 106–12, CSEL, 16, p. 111.

¹⁴³ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, XXI. 590–93, CSEL, 30, p. 177.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine, *Civ. dei*, XXII. 8, line 333, CCSL, 48, p. 823.

¹⁴⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 128–29, CSEL, 16, pp. 111–12: 'desuper infusi mutandum nectare roris, | quo fluit in sanctum celestis gratia sucum'.

¹⁴⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 132–45, CSEL, 16, p. 112: 'Credentes dominum non claudi fine locorum | et miserantis opem cunctas excedere metas, | incunctante fide praesentia munera poscunt | praesentis domini, qui pro virtute favoris | non longe ad sese venientum vota fatigat, | propter et admotos contingit ubique rogantes, | nec tardos vitat, properis viciniore adstat, | fitque viae finis solus conatus euntis. | haec qui corde gerunt, quaecumque in parte vocati | munus habent domini, seu sanctis credita mandent | vota viris seu sacratis quaecumque recondant |

The oil miracle, then, is actualized and universalized. Visible and invisible are here effectively connected through the correspondence of their images and made effectively 'present' through their being addressed while they are visualized in the mind. And, significantly, Christ's compassion itself is now described as a deed of power or miracle.¹⁴⁷

Thus the, here unnamed, 'highly placed lady' (Sulpicius had identified her as Count Avitianus's wife¹⁴⁸) sent her oil to the saint, believing that

through her prayers, from nearby, to such a servant of God she would receive heavenly favours through Martin's prayers, just as if she had been carried hastily in an agile flight [to Jerusalem] and, after having embraced the banner of the Cross and the Wood of salvation, carried her flask into the tomb itself of the Lord.¹⁴⁹

Paulinus's readers or listeners, then, are invited to imagine and experience Martin's church as that in Jerusalem and his tomb as that of Christ. Through the presence of Martin's body there and his putative intercession, imagining the embracing of the Cross there brings Christ's saving power to the spot — *imaging/experiencing the symbol presences its power*.

Paulinus also adds significant details that increase the effect of Sulpicius's story: he tells us that she left the long neck of the flask to be blessed empty so that there would be room for the cap; in this condition it was given to a slave to be carried to the saint. Martin then gave his blessing at once so as not to let her doubt his goodwill:

And at once God showed through the signs he granted how great a gift the present blessing conferred, lest — because of her anxiety — her faith should perhaps become feeble. The chosen men who were there, because Christ had ordered them to come to be witnesses to so great a miracle, saw how that liquid increased in volume while Martin prayed, so that it swelled and rose upwards as a wave and filled the empty part of the vessel with a raised-up deep; and while hurrying to the top, it did not leave the bottom empty; it boiled over in waves and remained full at the bottom; the volume grew through [the blessing which] was poured in, not by the emptying of what was already there.¹⁵⁰

sanctificanda locis. Christus quod corpore sancto | non adiit, virtute tegit, licet ille reversus | ad sublime poli iamdudum et corpore regnet.'

¹⁴⁷ The unfamiliar terms used, *virtus favoris*, were possibly dictated by the poem's metre, but seem to point to this meaning.

¹⁴⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 3. 2, SC, 510, p. 296.

¹⁴⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 150–54, CSEL, 16, p. 112: 'Quod precius tanti pietas vicina ministri | non aliter votis Martino orante faveret, | quam si pernici propere translata volatu | intra ipsum domini ferret sua vota sepulchrum, | vexillum complexa crucis lignumque salutis.'

¹⁵⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 170–80, CSEL, 16, p. 113: 'Confestimque deus per signa indulta probavit, | quantum conferret praesens benedictio donum, | ne fortasse fides sensu

As we saw in the chapter about Sulpicius, unless it was a case of psychokinesis, this is a spiritual-affective pattern perceived and presented as a visible event. Another (humorous?) detail is that the happy slave went home 'exultans' (exulting)¹⁵¹ — perhaps an aural allusion to the 'exundans' (flowing over in waves) of three lines earlier; possibly also a hint that he may now and then have skipped for joy? This would have given a natural explanation for the soiling of his hands and clothes by the oil in the open bottle, which Sulpicius had attributed to its then still continuing to increase. Finally, Paulinus supports the event's veracity by explicitly adducing the prophets' precedent, adding that it shows that one's requests to a saint are honoured.¹⁵² In contrast with Sulpicius, then, the poet stresses the event explicitly as a visible sign of the invisible presence of Christ, and as a proof of Christ's and the saint's hearing their requests for those uncertain in faith.¹⁵³ Not the past but the present is being pointed to here. The new cult of Martin is being underpinned. Just as for his namesake in Nola, for this Paulinus too an event does not need to be 'impossible' to be designated as a miracle — its sign-value is primary.

He begins the next story, that of the fallen flask of oil, with an introduction of Sulpicius as a friend of Martin and an eyewitness of the event, as well as an author scrupulous about reporting only the truth. The hearer is not told — perhaps some are expected to know, and for the rest it would not be important — that this author is in fact the source of all that Paulinus is telling us about the saint. Sulpicius is said to have taken the saint's gift of a flask of oil blessed by him to his home, 'rejoicing at the succour of power, the sign of favour, [...] believing himself to be carrying the gift of health/salvation'¹⁵⁴ — all of which the subsequent miracle will make manifest. In the description of the flask standing on the sill of a high window hidden from sight by a transparent curtain, a moment of a potential 'seeing the invisible' appears: Paulinus tells his readers that Sulpicius had covered it with a white cloth 'so that the spread-out linen would keep off aimless gazes — opposing

trepidante labaret, | praesentes stupuere viri (quod Christus adesse | iusserat electos tanta ad miracula testes) | sic crevisse illum Martino orante liquorem, | ut sursum elati consurgens unda tumoris | obpleret vacuam suspenso gurgite partem, | sic iuge ad summum properans, ne linqueret imum, | ferveret exundans, considens plena maneret, | cresceret infusus, sed non vacuanda receptis.'

¹⁵¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 182, CSEL, 16, p. 113.

¹⁵² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 184–88, CSEL, 16, p. 113.

¹⁵³ Cf. Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 579–80, 741–43.

¹⁵⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 217, 219, CSEL, 16, p. 115: 'congaudens virtutis opem, monumenta favoris, [...] credens indultam sese deferre salutem'.

the eyes but not stopping minds'.¹⁵⁵ Does Paulinus mean that Sulpicius would have *imagined* seeing the flask as it was under the cloth and experienced this 'mental seeing' as one of a real presence, in a manner similar to what we saw Paulinus of Nola doing? Or does he mean that the human mind can somehow, in a 'clair-voyant' manner, reach out, 'touch', and communicate with an object hidden from view with the energy and sensibility of the 'heart'? Or a combination of these?

The careless slave pulling at the covering cloth is said to have done so 'prope-rantis turbine dextrae' (with the whirlwind of his hasty right hand).¹⁵⁶ As we saw in the description of the possessed, Paulinus indicates that the demonic, out-of-control rotary motion is central in much of what goes wrong.¹⁵⁷ The implication here is that this gesture too was demonically instigated. With an unbelievable exaggeration for effect he then makes the hearer experience the emotive shock of the fallen glass's impact upon the marble floor; not only does the stunned slave turn white with terror, his master too blanches, as

the sound at once rose to the vault of the chamber, wholly filling it with the reverberations of its tinkling quality; dashing against itself as it rose from where it hit the ground to the [room's] highest point.

But the flask did not feel the impact of so great a fall; its outside of encrusted crystal remained undamaged. In this manner, the liquid inside, enclosed in a fragile attire, hardened the exterior container of the hollow basket. You would almost think that the marble [floor] had been changed into feathers to undo that ruining fall by [being] a soft couch. In this manner, o Martin, your merit and your grace together piously hold and protect the gifts sanctified by your blessing!¹⁵⁸

As indicated earlier, one could suspect that this was a lucky accident, dressed up to function as an image of a spiritual pattern. For the flask had been covered by a cloth and is likely to have fallen upon that cloth, possibly even somewhat doubled up from the fall. Sulpicius's writings as well as Paulinus's whole poem, however, testify to their belief that Martin's blessing was irrefragable. Again, 'the world we perceive

¹⁵⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 224–25, CSEL, 16, p. 115: 'ut distenta vagos prohiberent lintea visus | occursura oculis, sed non arcentia mentes'.

¹⁵⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 226, CSEL, 16, p. 115.

¹⁵⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 417, CSEL, 16, p. 122.

¹⁵⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, v. 230–40, CSEL, 16, p. 115: 'Et sonitus rapido redit fastigia pulsu, | tinnitusque vago simul omnia murmure complens | inlinit semet summis, surrexit ab imis. | non sensit tantos ampulla inpacta fragores, | inlaesa et vitreae manserunt tegmina crustae. | si liquor interior fragili conclusis amictu | exteriora cavae duravit tympana cratis, | marmora ut in plumas penitus mutata putares | excepisse illam per mollia fulchra ruinam. | sic meritum, Martine, tuum, sic gratia iugis | sanctificata pie recipit, benedicta tuetur.'

is a dream we learn to have from a script we have not written'.¹⁵⁹ The image of the blessed oil protecting its fragile container makes visible the experienced pattern of the saint's invisible grace. As such, Paulinus is likely to have regarded this miracle too as making visible a 'mystery' or divine transformational process. More than a century later, the irrefragability of a fallen glass lamp is similarly described, and now interpreted as a divine sign of a dead princess's continuing life in heaven by Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus.¹⁶⁰

'A Whirlpool Without a River': Recent and Contemporary Miracles

Paulinus's introduction to his sixth book gives another double-exposure image: he says that it is Martin himself who, through the person of Perpetuus, is commanding him to produce a versification of the Bishop's record of recent miracles of the saint.¹⁶¹ No one who has asked the saint for help, Paulinus writes, will leave without it, for 'the knocking of the faith does not take long. [...] Reading the words of the mind, the saint looks into the conscience and sees the heart'.¹⁶² In the miracles recounted, most of the patterns of evil and healing which we saw described in Sulpicius's material recur. Thus the whirlwind, the abyss or whirlpool, and sometimes invisible chains are prominent; the hollow cloud (of the apparitions) and the leper's covering of spots, however, are absent. There is only one detailed story of healing, resembling that of the girl in Trier but with a sad ending. A conspicuous new theme, however, appears: that of divine punishment. No doubt in response to the needs of a bishop who, lacking arms, needed to exact respect for his invisible patron, a new persona is being constructed here for the gentle and humble saint who — almost a hundred years earlier — had forgiven Briccius and reportedly had never been angry with anyone.¹⁶³

Paulinus begins with four stories about the antics of the possessed, then a slew of punishments: a promising cure that ends in punishment, followed by three punishments of crimes. After this, the stories show the saint's positive, rescuing

¹⁵⁹ Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, IV. 28, MGH SSrM, 1. 1, p. 161, lines 5–10; Venantius Fortunatus, *De Gelesuinta*, lines 273–80, 365–66, in *Carmina*, ed. by Reydellet, pp. 71, 75.

¹⁶¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 25, CSEL, 16, p. 139.

¹⁶² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 9, 11, CSEL, 16, p. 139: 'Nil longe est pulsante fide [...] mentis verba legit, qui sensum introspicit et cor | visit et arcanum percenset pectoris antrum'.

¹⁶³ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, III. 15, SC, 510, pp. 348–54.

power: there is an intriguing update of the oil miracle, followed by three instances of the saint's power over the elements. We shall examine these new stories in the clustered order in which Paulinus presents them, through their dominant patterns: those of evil being punished and those of healing grace.

'Airy Chains Hold Fast the Constricted Body'

In the church, the demons in the possessed are tortured by the invisible judge — Martin? — to make them first confess their crimes through the mouths of the persons they have captured, and then to leave them and vanish. Paulinus gives an elaborate and very revealing description of the various positions of the possessed's bodies, some of which extend into metaphor:

Airy chains hold fast the constricted body: the limbs which sound as though they are moving aimlessly, you are surprised to see fettered. Things seen strengthen the faith. Whomever this punishment binds, manifests his torments by trying to free his arms from the ties that constrain them, and he strains against the obstacles holding fast his limbs. And what about when their feet, resting in the apertures of the balustrade [separating the choir from the nave], uphold [them in] an airy journey? Their tottering bodies rush around and the empty air supports their imposed flight.¹⁶⁴

Again, 'things seen strengthen the faith'. Paulinus (or Perpetuus) deserves credit for not attempting a repeat performance of Sulpicius's statement about people hanging upside down without any visible support: a balustrade is added to make the hyperboles seem more or less credible. And nothing about clothes falling upwards either. Of course, this story's audience — very likely in the self-same church — could have challenged these statements about the present time.

'The Abyss' and 'the Whirlpool'

But the possessed of the fifth century also appear to have invented another desperate act: they threw themselves into a well within the church precincts, probably

¹⁶⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 48–55, CSEL, 16, pp. 140–41: 'Aëria innexum constringunt vincula corpus. | quos rebare vagos, nexos miraberis artus. | firmabunt inspecta fidem. quem poena ligavit | tormenta implicitis prodit constrictior ulnis, | pulsat et adfixis obiecta obstacula membris. | quid cum sidentes cancelli in tramite gressus | aërium sustentat iter? nutantia currunt | corpora, et impositum cava subvehit aura volatum.'

the baptismal one, from which ‘salutiferae undae’ (health-bearing waves)¹⁶⁵ came forth:

Their impelled bodies were thrown with a sudden jerk, forced to fall by the guilty one [i.e. the Devil] who, having bashed their heads, submerged their preceding head and all their members in the deep of the whirlpool, where the head was pressed upon by the weight of the members.

But who does not see, when their submerged bodies rise up again, that the passage has been widened, and that the couch of [divine] favour has softly opened its arms to the possessed falling ones? The robber [i.e. Devil] oppresses the bodies; mercy preserves their life; the effort of the [divine] aid given is more conspicuous than the Devil’s punishment. Whoever is tottering because of an uncertain faith, pay attention! The bodies rise up again and are led back to life through Martin’s prayer! The deep/abyss absorbs only the body of [these] unhappy persons — the well [however] does not close its large opening upon those who have fallen in it.¹⁶⁶

One wonders why the ‘well’ — how large was its opening? how deep was it? — was not covered after the first case of such a misguided plunge. The church staff must have pulled the jumpers out, but they go unmentioned; the undescribed rescue is simply attributed to the saint’s intercession in heaven. This train of thought resembles Paulinus’s understanding of Bishop Perpetuus’s request to him as in fact that of Martin. And again as in the case of the marble floor, a concrete material object is presumed to change its qualities, here size and hardness, upon divine command. As with Sulpicius’s miracle stories, this looks like a case of mundane details being omitted and divine ones substituted to present the event as a visible miracle, but also as a symbol of a ‘mystery’. For the image of the deep well in which the devil throws one is, of course, affect-laden: it stands for the abyss as spiritual emptiness. Only divine aid gets one out of this.

The next story makes visible another way in which to overcome the abyss, this time represented by the wide River Loire, flowing between the city and Martin’s monastery. One day, ‘an insane demon’, after having driven a possessed person away from Martin’s basilica,

¹⁶⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 57, CSEL, 16, p. 141.

¹⁶⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 58–70, CSEL, 16, p. 141: ‘Corpora praecipiti iaciuntur concita saltu, | in primum cogente reo, qui vertice presso | praegressum sua membra caput detrudit in altum | gurgitis et cerebrum membrorum mole perurguet. | sed quis non videat, cum corpora mersa resurgant, | extentos patuisse sinus, et fulchra favoris | molliter exceptis ulnas reserasse ruinis? | artus praedo gravat, vitam elementia servat. | plus opis apparet studium quam poena latronis. | quisque fide nutante labas, adtende: resurgunt | corpora et ad vitam Martino orante trahuntur. | absorbet tantum miserorum membra profundum | nec puteus patulo conchlussos ore perurguet.’

went towards [this river] with the body of the unhappy man, in order to drown the prey he had seized in the nearby deep. But the infinite Mercy did not allow the cruel deed [to be carried out], and took away the most savage rights of the dire Tyrant. A hardened path was trodden upon, the solidified surface [of the river] resisted [his weight], and the water did not moisten his hastening feet. The crowds were astonished at his dry clothes when he reached the other side.¹⁶⁷

Paulinus may be taking for granted his listeners' knowing about the picture of Peter's walking upon the sea of Galilee that was present in Martin's church.¹⁶⁸ One surmises that in the oral tradition that transmitted this story, the image of this picture came to overlay whatever more mundane actions (rescue efforts by others present?) may have happened in the original incident — an example of what Paulinus's inscription hoped would happen! He continues by saying that, once the possessed man had returned to his right mind, he did not remember what had happened during the time that his mind had been 'disturbed'.¹⁶⁹ A possessing demon, however, might also break out in languages (presumed to be) unknown to the persons they inhabited: Greek or Hunnic. Again a preference for a miraculous explanation, when it must have been general knowledge that Greek speakers travelled in Gaul and that some Huns, after their army's defeat by the Roman coalition led by the general Aëtius in 451, appear to have remained in Gaul instead of returning to the Hungarian plain.¹⁷⁰

In the next story, a demon in one of the possessed is divinely constrained to do something useful with his whirlwind speed: to observe and then report the outcome of an important battle. When the Roman general Aegidius was besieged in Arles by the Visigoths and everyone in Tours was greatly alarmed for their own safety as well,

then perhaps one of those [spirits] who had been dragged along by the most hideous rage to wish to drink blood in a slaughter, was moved by the Lord — as though seized by a sudden whirlwind and travelling faster than the winds through breezes and clouds — and brought forth the order of events out of a captive body, proclaiming that at the very time

¹⁶⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 82–88, CSEL, 16, p. 142: 'Insanus petiit misero cum corpore daemon, | mersurus raptam vicino in gurgite praedam. | verum nil patitur miseratio tanta cruentum | atque adimit diro saevissima iura tyranno. | duratum calcatur iter, solidata rebbat | gressibus et passus properos non adluit unda. | trans fluvium siccis stupuerunt agmina vestes.'

¹⁶⁸ Matthew 14. 29; Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, p. 820; Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de orantibus*, 17–18, CSEL, 16, p. 165.

¹⁶⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 91–92, CSEL, 16, p. 142: 'turbatae tempore mentes'.

¹⁷⁰ Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 98–99.

and moment of his speaking the city had been relieved of its siege through Martin’s prayer, and that God had granted to him the [safety of the] people and their general.¹⁷¹

Again the whirlwind, but here the Lord has a hand in it, and the demon’s statement is used to allay the anxiety of the people. Paulinus compares the incident to the Lord’s turning Balaam’s intended curse into a benediction of his people (Numbers 22).

‘Deprived of the Gift of Such a Patron’

When Paulinus turns to punitive miracles, he begins on a hopeful note:

How many times indeed were all kinds of illness cured by remedies — not by a doctor’s hand, not by the application of health-giving juice, not by pressing of a sharp iron, not by the drinking of a herbal potion, nor by the application of the fire of sulphur to destroy ulcers — but by the flowing of his healing word, by his right faith, proven by his sudden power, close by, inviting the weak in faith and healing those strong in it!¹⁷²

After listing the kinds of ills that were cured and saying that each and every time a remedy was given — a rather tall claim — Paulinus begins to tell the sadder story of a pagan girl afflicted by paralysis. Significantly, it reads like a repetition of that of the crippled girl in Trier, but with the saint’s presence now not visible. Whereas, according to Sulpicius, Martin’s cures of pagans had always ended happily with a conversion, however, here the parents in the end did not react appropriately and were severely punished for it. We are told that they had long been sad about their daughter’s plight:

the violence of the illness had taken away the use of her whole body, and all but dead within, she lay with her powerless body on a bed, her only sign of life being her sighs: with her fettered breathing and thin breath she palpitated with her panting breast.

¹⁷¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 126–33, CSEL, 16, pp. 143–44: ‘Ergo aliquis forte ex illis, quos tetrior ira | traxerat ad votum sorbendi in caede cruoris, | praecipiti ad nutum domini quasi turbine raptus | praecedensque citos trans flabra et nubila ventos | gestorum seriem captivo e corpore prompsit, | proclamans isdem momentis, tempore eodem | obsidione urbem Martino orante solutam, | atque ipsi donasse deum populumque ducemque.’

¹⁷² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 152–58, CSEL, 16, pp. 144–45: ‘Iam vero erga omnes curatio quanta medellas, | non dedicante manu, non suco adlata salubri, | nec ferri perpessa aciem nec graminis haustum | ulcere nec raptum resoluti sulphoris ignem, | sed verbo medicante fluens recteque probata | praecipiti virtute fide, quae comminus adstans | omnibus invitat trepidos, dum sanat adeptos.’

Having been carried by the hands of her parents to the merit of the saint, the unfortunate girl lay close to his tomb. And with alternating weeping and bathing their faces with tears, they vied with each other with rivers of tears. The holy compassion was moved: hardly had a light application of blessed oil touched her miserable limbs when her feet leapt up, her sinews recovered their vigour, her strengthened arms felt their desired movements, and her straightened hands played with the loosened fingers.¹⁷³

Her parents could hardly believe it, but were overjoyed: ‘their shining faces seized upon/were intoxicated by (*rapiunt*) the new miracles’.¹⁷⁴ This was, of course, the wrong response, and indeed they did not long remember the benefit they had received; they returned to their old ‘intoxication’ by the pagan gods:

Those who had burdened the [saint’s] threshold with assiduous prayers, promising to turn at once from their error [of paganism] after the cure, and to provide, by a donation, speedy succour to the poor — the poor, whom the Bishop [Martin] generously fed and clothed [...] — these pagans again seized upon [became intoxicated by] the poison of the old serpent. That same serpent, who had once persuaded Eve now, instigated by envy, forced these people with a similar advice to neglect and tread upon the faith, [...] deeply forgetful of the [saint’s] favour.

With an insane heart, [her father,] ungrateful in faith, sought out the rites of idols, turned away from the road he had decided upon, and [thereby] snatched his revived girl away from the Author of life and gave her back to the dire Robber. He was ungrateful in faith, but enslaved to the Enemy. When the virgin, deceived by [her father’s] error, saw from afar the lugubrious graves of the Tartarean Tyrant, she collapsed and, deprived of the gift of such a patron, her wasted body fell prey to the same ills. Soon death seized the girl.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 167–80, CSEL, 16, pp. 145–46: ‘Omnem membrorum usum violentia morbi | abstulerat, cunctisque simul praemortua nervis | exanimos penitus stratis reiecerat artus, | et solo vivens gemitu spiramine fesso | et flatu exiguo stomachum quatiebat anhelum. | haec sancti ad meritum manibus delata parentum | propter vicinum iacuit miseranda sepulchrum. | alterno nunc ora rigant rorantia fletu | inque vicem effuso lacrimarum flumine certant. | permovit sanctum clementia. vix levis artus | attigerat miseros benedicti tactus olivi, | exiluire pedes, nervi sumpsere vigorem, | et valida optatos senserunt brachia motus, | erectaeque manus digitis lusere solutis.’

¹⁷⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 184, CSEL, 16, p. 146: ‘noua perspicui rapiunt miracula vultus’.

¹⁷⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 185–89, 192–95, 198–208, CSEL, 16, pp. 146–47: ‘Attamen haut longa hoc meritum servavit honestas. | qui nunc adsiduis onerabant limina votis, | spondentes celerem post praemia tanta recursum, | atque inopum sumptum mox largitione levandum, | munifice quos sanctus alit [...] anguis ut antiqui dirum rapuere venenum | atque idem sperens qui quondam suaserat Evam, | hos quoque consilii similis livore coegit | neglectam calcare fidem [...] penitusque oblita favoris. | idolicos petiit vesano pectore ritus, | dispositum mutavit iter vegetamque puellam | auctori vitae abripuit diroque latroni | dedit, ingratus fidei, sed subditus

In a community in which all worshipped the same God, Christ had instructed his disciples to dispense their gifts free of charge (Matthew 10. 8). And as we saw, the living Martin, like Christ, had preferred to suffer himself rather than hurt anyone. In a situation of great insecurity, however, his putative power was now being harnessed to support an episcopal policy of religious integration. One wonders here, however, what in fact came first: the relapse of the girl into her illness or that of her parents into paganism.

'The Swift Avenging Judgement'

The next stories show that the saint could enforce correct behaviour by punishing different kinds of crimes, including those not directly relating to himself. Paulinus introduces this section with a telling general statement: 'Meanwhile [the saint] forced the unjust with a just terror to feel the power of God; for frequently, if precepts are not enough to constrain the unruly, being struck by misfortune forces them [to obey].'¹⁷⁶ Under the pressure of circumstances, the living saint's evangelical mentality was being reshaped to fit into a justice system with torture and death penalties, as it had formerly been administered by Count Avitianus.

A wandering Hun who had stolen the crown hanging above the saint's tomb — a symbol of the heavenly one which the saint would now be wearing — got off relatively mildly: he was struck by temporary blindness. Paulinus explains and instructs the reader:

his eyes had sensed their guilt; as announcers of the heart, they wished to hide the booty it had perceived. In his desire, he had sinned through sight, he was not able to see what he had seized, and that which he had desired with his eyes was taken and melted away. [...] But why should he be surprised about his eyesight being closed off by a sudden mist? He was already blind when he saw [the crown] wrongly as something to be stolen.¹⁷⁷

hosti: | verum ubi tartarei feralia busta tyranni | eminus aspexit deceptae virginis error, | concidit,
et dono tanti spoliata patroni | addicta est propriis eliso corpore morbis, | donec sanata anteriore
puellam | mors raperet.'

¹⁷⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 215–17, CSEL, 16, p. 147: 'Interdum iniustos iusto terrore coegit | virtutem sentire dei. nam saepe rebelles, | si nondum praecepta regunt, vel verbera cogunt.'

¹⁷⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 230–33, 237–38, CSEL, 16, p. 148: 'Sensere oculi culpam, quod nuntia cordi | lumina perspectam voluerunt condere praedam. | intuitu peccavit ovans nec cernere quivit, | quae rapuit, liquitque oculos subtracta voluptas. [...] quid stupet aspectum subita caligine clausum? | iam tum caecus erat, male cum rapienda videbat.'

The punishment, then, fits the crime. Advised by a friend who guided him back to the altar, he confessed his crime, returned the crown of his own accord, and thereby merited forgiveness:

his grief compensated for his blame and reformed his condition. So as to get back what he had lost, he gave back what he had taken. His perverse mind got its punishment — leading to his conversion; this was the remedy.¹⁷⁸

In the next story, an irate man killed another for an unspecified reason; both are said to have been possessed by a demon, but this could mean that these merely ‘instigated’ their behaviour. Thereupon the first man killed himself. Paulinus’s comment:

How quickly did the swift avenging judgement manifest itself, and did the speedy vengeance follow upon such a crime! Let no one think that this [punishment] was too hard: when few signs [i.e. miracles, are able to] incite fear, punishment terrifies, and dread is the remedy.¹⁷⁹

In addition to the notion of divine punishment for a crime committed by an individual, the notion of what sounds like a more personal ‘vengeance’ in the context of the saint’s cult here makes its appearance. Reaching back to this Old Testament notion — also already noticeable in Paulinus of Milan’s description of the events around the threatened Ambrose¹⁸⁰ — is more than likely to have been precipitated by the Church’s institutional needs.

We see what this could mean in practice in the last punishment story. At a certain moment in the building of Martin’s new basilica, elegant columns — likely to have been taken from a pagan temple — needed to be transported to there, and a number of people volunteered to help in the project. However, one man, who may have clung to the old gods whose temples were being dismantled,

whose heart had been blinded, rebelled against the general hurry to do this; he made ready to go out to meet [the company] and, stirred by the instigation of an enraged demon, dared to [plan to] stop the transport on its journey — meanwhile threatening his wife, who had provided the vehicles necessary for the operation from one of their nearby estates, [by saying] that she would pay for what she had done with her tears.

¹⁷⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 246–48, CSEL, 16, p. 148: ‘Compensat plectenda dolor: pervasa reformat, | amissa ut capiat: sumit sua, quae tulit offert. | mens perversa habuit poenam, conversa medellam.’

¹⁷⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 261–64, CSEL, 16, p. 149: ‘Quam cito iudicium velox vindicta probavit | et se cum tali admisso propera ultio iunxit! | nec quisquam dura ista putet, cum pauca timorem | signa acuunt, poena exterret, formido medella est.’

¹⁸⁰ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii*, LIII. 1, lines 6–9, ed. by Bastiaensen, p. 120.

On the way to his destination, [however,] he was thrown from his horse, which had fallen in the limpid water of the ford of a small stream, in which he did not need to push away any water that could submerge his prone body. He searched for waters to drown him, and lay dying in the shallow trickle; what he lay on and inhaled was sand. A shipwreck without a ship and a whirlpool without a river snatched him away: the elements obeyed God. Hence it is not possible to misrepresent the event; it was accomplished solely by [divine] command.¹⁸¹

We would tend to see here only a man, knocked unconscious by the fall, accidentally suffocated through lying face down in a trickle of water; today, babies have been known to drown similarly in two centimetres of water. Its context, however, made it possible for the Church to present the event as a divine punishment, to which the demonic image of an invisible whirlpool could be applied. Paulinus thereupon interprets the man’s threat to his wife as an unintentional prophecy of her tears for his death and continues, rather vindictively:

Thus the people, devout and eager through their greater faith, hurried to carry out their outstanding task; [that this was] the judgement [of God] was clear, proven by the deed of power, and [through this] the [people’s] devotion increased.¹⁸²

Once more, seeing is believing, and miracles — also of punishment — increase faith, if only by fear.

‘A New Breath’

Paulinus then hastens to return to positive reasons for faith:

Having read about the ones who were corrected through misfortunes, now put away fear: count the sweet gifts of your distinguished patron; and after [having heard about] the vanquished serpent’s poison having been struck down, now rejoice, first, in the juice of the

¹⁸¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 269–82, CSEL, 16, pp. 149–50: ‘Quidam tam properis caecato corde rebellans | obuius ire parat vel talia coepta morari | instinctu impulsus furiosi daemonis audet, | insuper uxori minitans, quod fletibus eius | expletum pensaret opus, cum forte propinquo | rure habitans quaesita operi instrumenta dedisset. | nec mora et in parvi vada perlucentia rivi | praecipiti deiectus equo non repperit ullas, | quae possent pronum corpus demergere, lymfas. | mergendus quaesivit aquas tenuique fluento | incubuit: moriens quas presserat hausit harenas. | naufragium sine puppe rapit, sine flumine gurges. | agnoscunt elementa deum. nil casibus inde | mentiri licuit, quod iussio sola peregit.’

¹⁸² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 288–90, CSEL, 16, p. 150: ‘Sed populo maiore fide devotus et instans | praecipuum celeravit opus. virtute probata | iudicium emicuit, praesens devotio crevit.’

fragrant olive. For as often as someone put it in a place close to the tomb, true grace altered the liquid and at once gave it a swift-working healing power.¹⁸³

An updated version of the oil miracle — one that would show visibly that Martin's blessing was now still available to believers — follows. Bishop Perpetuus, we are told, wishing to imitate the earlier examples of his pious teacher (i.e. Martin), placed a flask of oil on the tomb, 'with unhesitating faith, so that the saint's spirit might flow into it, and suffuse it with a new breath (*nova [...] aura*) that would heal all that touched it'.¹⁸⁴ And, referring back to his previous statement that the saint's spirit inheres not only in his physical remains but also in the stone of his tomb, the poet writes:

because he [Perpetuus] wished this remedy of his venerated [master] to be truly effective and, as a well-known benefit, to remedy all illnesses, he hastily grated some dust from the blessed marble and mixed it [into the liquid]; [with this] he doubled the strength of the holy oil — so that by this sprinkling [of gratings] into the liquid its doubled power would increase faith through its [efficacious] contact, as well as [work more speedily for] health. In truth, when the liquid felt the touch of only a tiny bit (*modica mica*) [of this dust], the rapid [working of] grace lifted up the contacted oil, and the swelling [liquid] began to boil and flow over [the vessel]; the abounding volume increased and grew from within through the gift given; mounting higher than its neck, it streamed over the flask.¹⁸⁵

One cannot help wondering here about the size of the 'tiny bit' of gratings which the Bishop had added, and consequently how much of the overflowing was caused simply by physical displacement. Be that as it may, for Perpetuus it confirmed the continuity of Martin's effective power. Paulinus tells us that, notwithstanding its

¹⁸³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 291–97, CSEL, 16, p. 150: 'Iam posito terrore leges, correcte periclis. | munera praecipui numerabis blanda patroni | et post percussum victo serpente venenum | nectarei primum suco gaudebis olivi. | quod quotiens sancti vicinia iuncta sepulchri | comminus excepit, mutavit vera liquorem | gratia et advexit properas festina medellas.'

¹⁸⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 299–300, CSEL, 16, pp. 150–51: 'Incunctante fide, quod spiritus ille rigaret, | Et nova contigui perfunderet aura favoris'. In Bhutan, when I asked a Buddhist priest to bless a prayer necklace I had bought, he interspersed his muttered blessing with frequent blowing over it (now and then looking up at me with a little smile).

¹⁸⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 303–13, CSEL, 16, p. 151: 'Hanc cum vellet opem veneratus ferre saluti | expertumque bonum cunctis adhibere medellis, | abrasus propere benedicto e marmore pulvis | admixtus sancto vires duplicavit olivo, | ut sic resperso virtus geminata liquori | augeret contacta fidem, sociata salutem. | verum ubi vel modicam sensit vicinia micam, | gratia contactum velox suspendit olivum | et tumor exundans efferbuit. auxit abundans | copia quod coram prolato munere crevit. | celsior ore suo diffusio claustra rigavit.'

overflowing, the flask remained full. He adds — amending Sulpicius's statement with another double-exposure image — that this oil did not stain anyone's clothes but, on the contrary, made them more beautiful, a testimony to its *gloria*, in the Old Testament meaning a fiery glow as an epiphany of Jahweh.¹⁸⁶ And this glow is associated with Shiloh, the place in which the Hebrews' Tabernacle was kept before it was moved to the Temple (Judges 18. 31), thus a central holy place of the nation; it was also the location of a spring and a pool whose water healed the man born blind after Christ had put mud and spittle on his eyes (John 9. 7). The overflowing blessed oil, then, ends up as a visualization of divine grace that resembles the bubbling spring in Shiloh, and the oil miracle is consistently associated with and assimilated to Christ's (present) miracles in the Holy Land — another 'mystery' of the Kingdom.

Paulinus's description of this miracle is a telling part of Bishop Perpetuus's attempt to make Tours a centre of ecclesiastical and spiritual power.¹⁸⁷ Was it perhaps on 11 November, Saint Martin's feast, in 461 — when Perpetuus, as metropolitan of an ecclesiastical province, had convened a council¹⁸⁸ and was showing the partially finished new church to the nine attending bishops — that he asked for and received this sign from the saint? It would have been the ideal moment. By publishing the saint's miraculous power for all to see in this church with its murals and inscriptions, Perpetuus not only hoped to stimulate large-scale pilgrimage to the shrine, but above all to impress everyone, including the encroaching Visigoths (they were to occupy Tours in 470), with the fact that the city had a powerful protector at the court of the real King in heaven.¹⁸⁹ If Perpetuus did not attempt the oil miracle then (if for the first time, it might have been too risky), I am tempted to imagine Paulinus reciting his just-finished epic to the bishops at this council.

¹⁸⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, vi. 315, CSEL, 16, p. 151. See Aalen, 'Glory, Honour. Doga. Time'.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 740–41.

¹⁸⁸ Munier, *Concilia Galliae*, pp. 142–49; discussed in Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 145–46.

¹⁸⁹ On the pictorial cycles in Tours and elsewhere in this period, see Kessler, 'Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul'. On the political developments, see Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 152–57, and Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, pp. 17–22.

‘The Wax Killed the Fire’

The last four stories in book six recount cases in which Martin’s miraculous power acted far from his tomb, reversing and rescuing from — possibly demonically instigated — adverse natural phenomena. Two of these are important for what they show about the imaging of spiritual powers. In one, the image of the abyss again plays a central role. Just before Easter, a huge crowd of pilgrims crossing the river in boats to visit and pray at Martin’s monastery were caught by a storm brought on by the ‘invidiae livor’ (pale envy) of the ‘mortis vel criminis auctor’ (author of death and sin):¹⁹⁰

he approached a boat filled with pilgrims, and submerged it in the middle of the waves into the infinite deep (*vasto [...] gurgite*), seizing and enveloping all at the same time in the deep water (*alto [...] profundo*), dragging the disordered multitude along the current of the river.¹⁹¹

After imagining the Devil enjoying the various torments of the pilgrims struggling against immersion, Paulinus reports that a great cry went up and all those still on the shore prostrated themselves to weep and pray to Martin for help on this special day. And indeed,

suddenly there was in the middle of the waves a gentler spirit, which took away the wicked power of dire Death. The water supported the wandering bodies: solidified for their safety, the river carried the bodies on the water; not furrowed and hit by the strokes of swimming and flailing hands, it carried its burden unmoved, and brought joy back to the shore.¹⁹²

Again, human action (the very likely swimming) is expressly excluded to make the rescue appear executed by divine action alone, and the water changes its quality from soft to hard. Whatever happened, this is how people felt about it afterwards, and how they (or the Church) *wanted* (them) to feel about it. It is a lesson of trust in the saint. As a foil to the Devil’s intended tortures, a description of this joy of each finding his and her dear ones to be safe and giving thanks for this follows. The

¹⁹⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 370, 369, respectively, CSEL, 16, p. 154.

¹⁹¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 371–74, CSEL, 16, p. 154: ‘Obvius ire parat, navemque adgressus onustam | fluctibus in mediis vastoque in gurgite mersit, | involvens alto simul omnia rapta profundo | implicitumque trahens decursu fluminis agmen.’

¹⁹² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 388–94, CSEL, 16, pp. 154–55: ‘Adfuit in mediis confestim mitior undis | spiritus et dirae rapuit iura improba morti. | suspendit vaga membra liquor. solidata saluti | lymfa artus subvexit aquis. non icta natatu | nec permutatis sulcata et saucia palmis | inmotum gestavit onus ripisque revexit | gaudia, et advectam numeravit laeta salutem.’

pilgrims concerned refused to put on dry clothes for 'faith is not made cold by moistened clothing'.¹⁹³ As we saw, in his inscription above the door leading to the Loire, Paulinus appears to connect this rescue with a nearby mural depicting Peter walking on the waves towards Christ.¹⁹⁴ In the poem, however, he does not allude to this event but, more accurately, says that the Lord repeated his act of dividing the waters of the Jordan for the Israelites.¹⁹⁵ As already indicated, a picture of the Loire miracle was placed in Martin's church above the door to the riverside.

The last miracle story is about a candle end and a fire, again natural elements changing their properties, and it is a particularly trenchant case of inversion — a habit of thought which, as we saw, Paulinus may have taken over from Sedulius.¹⁹⁶ But the incident also reminds one of Paulinus of Nola's description of the fire there.¹⁹⁷ Our poet tells us that someone who had been given a candle end from Martin's tomb took it home, 'trusting that the blessing connected to so great a patron would assist his just faith and aid him by the merits of his power'.¹⁹⁸ And this soon proved to be true. For someone's negligence resulted in a rapidly spreading fire. While everyone cried and prayed to Martin for help,

the quick-witted master of the household himself took with a hasty right hand the flickering lights of the burning candles, spreading sweet light from the happy wax, and putting the fragrant flames in the middle of the fire, he repelled the pressing conflagration by the help of the [candle's] fire. The raging whirlwind stopped; the destroying Enemy at once turned its back and one spark put the madness of the fire to flight. [...] The hasty fire fled from its food, the candle, and nature feared its companion and nourishing honeycomb; by its [holy] power, the wax killed the flame that, as light, it nourishes with the clear fragrance of its liquid.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 405, CSEL, 16, p. 155: 'madidoque fides non alget amictu'.

¹⁹⁴ Matthew 14. 29–32. Pietri, *Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, p. 820, about Paulinus's *Versus de orantibus*, CSEL, 16, pp. 17–18.

¹⁹⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 409–15, CSEL, 16, p. 155.

¹⁹⁶ As in Sedulius, *Paschale carmen*, I. 85–91, CSEL, 10, p. 22.

¹⁹⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, XXVI. 401–12, CSEL, 30, p. 261.

¹⁹⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 470–71, CSEL, 16, p. 158: 'fidens quod tanti benedictio iuncta patroni | tam iustae fidei meritis virtutis adesset'.

¹⁹⁹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 484–90, 496–99, CSEL, 16, pp. 158–59: 'Ipse erus accensae rutilantia lumina cerae, | unguine felici blandam fundentia lucem, | praetrepida velox rapit ad penetralia dextra, | atque inter medias statuens flagrantia flammas | ignis praesidiis urgentem reppulit ignem. | haesit turbo urens. vastator protinus hostis | terga dedit rabiemque ignis scintilla fugavit. [...] ignis praetrepidans refugit sua pabula ceras | altoresque favos concors natura

The diabolic or demonic destructive power in the fire is again imaged as a whirlwind, even a raging and insane one. Its opposite, the gentle, fragrant, and self-immolating wax, stops — kills — the madness. Not only the power of a relic is being shown here but, again, also a spiritual lesson.

Paulinus ends his descriptions of the saint's deeds with the hope that the faithful people will read (or listen to) them.²⁰⁰ He concludes: 'It is clear that Death has no rights over the one whose [continuing] life is proven [by all that has been related]. Let the city of Tours rejoice in its perpetual bishop, Martin.'²⁰¹ The latter is, of course, a transparent pointer to Bishop Perpetuus's representing, perhaps even impersonating, the saint on earth.

'Recalling the Faith [...] Stored in his Body-self: Embodying the Image

In the appended versified story of his grandson's cure, finally, Paulinus gives a surprisingly detailed description of the physical effect of what we would understand as an imaginative re-enactment of Martin's miracles. The notion of healing through contact with a power-laden person or object had come to be well known in this period. As far as I know, however, there is no mention of a Christian cure through a *written document* before the turn of the fifth century, when Sulpicius Severus describes how physical contact with a hand-written letter sent by Saint Martin as bishop to the Christian prefect Arborius cured his daughter.²⁰² There, it is not the content of the letter — being purely administrative — that is powerful;²⁰³ its effect is evidently thought to derive from its past physical contact with the God-filled holy man's hand. In the case of Paulinus's grandson, however, it does

pavescit. | virtute interimit flammam, quam lumine nutrit, | nectare perspicuo redolens pinguido liquoris.'

²⁰⁰ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 501, CSEL, 16, p. 159: 'populo relegenda fidei'.

²⁰¹ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Vita Mart.*, VI. 505–06, CSEL, 16, p. 159: 'nil morti licuisse, palam cum vita probetur. | perpetuo urbs Turonum Martino antistite gaudet.'

²⁰² Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, XIX. 1, SC, 133, p. 292.

²⁰³ Sulpicius concludes the previous story by saying that threads from Martin's clothing, i.e. something that has been in contact with him, precipitate miracles upon the sick: *Vita sancti Martini*, XVIII. 5, SC, 133, p. 292; in the later *Dialogues*, he asserts that, just as in the Gospel story (Matthew 9. 20–22), a woman with a flow of blood was instantly cured by touching the hem of the saint's garment (*Gallus*, III. 9. 3, SC, 510, p. 322).

appear to be, primarily, the patient's assimilation of the letter's content that precipitates the cure.

The story is one of the most moving, elaborate, and significant hagiographical reports of this period.²⁰⁴ Behind the veil of stylistic clichés, the poet seems to show his own face again: that of a tired old man, who has been afflicted by great misfortune — no doubt caused by the then recurrent wars and spoliations — and sees the saint as the only hope in which he can still believe. His unprecedentedly precise description of the healing process, however, appears to show that, in his own fifth-century way, he was aware that firmly believing in and mentally imaging a saint's transformational miracles — as well as touching their material presentation in writing — could lead to an analogous physical replication.

The description of the cure begins with a statement of principle: 'It is the salvation itself [of the soul] that brings back life.'²⁰⁵ Spiritual healing, then, precedes physical healing. His grandson and his fiancée, Paulinus tells us, were both mortally ill, hardly being able to breathe (pneumonia?), having only a scarcely detectable pulse; fearing the worst, the author had avoided seeing them. But the young man, Paulinus writes, had one hope left; he committed his plight to the 'patron' who had assisted others in the neighbourhood: Saint Martin. For his confidence had been inspired by reading (Bishop Perpetuus's) scroll (*charta*) listing the saint's more recent miracles. The document was signed by the hand of the Bishop himself, happy to praise his dead teacher. The young man asked for this document 'with a scarcely audible murmur, but with unhesitating faith and certain hope. This faith gave the exhausted youth the strength to speak, and grace loosened his constricted tongue'.²⁰⁶ Then follows the strategy of healing:

For in the middle of the fires lighted by the fever, he applied these palm [branches] of deeds of holy power to his heaving breast; and by having recalled the faith which wrote [these stories], and having stored it in his very entrails, he caught hold of whatever [secret power] the page held hidden, and the instant remedy rushed towards his wish. Commanded by so many miracles, his sweat jolted up; and the rank of such a gift grew to be equal to [that of] those [earlier miracles], so that what would be written about it would produce faith in the earlier events that are preserved in writing. Amber does not raise up a stalk of hay with as

²⁰⁴ See Labarre, *Le Manteau partagé*, pp. 19–28.

²⁰⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione*, 21, CSEL, 16, p. 162: 'ipsa salus vitam revehit'.

²⁰⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione*, 40–42, CSEL, 16, p. 163: 'incunctante fide, spes non incerta poposcit. | exanimi iuveni vires fiducia fandi | praestitit et fessam laxavit gratia linguam'.

swift a leap [as that with which] the humour of the moist body, hurrying upon its command, came towards the document.²⁰⁷

This is one of the most fascinating passages in the miracle literature which I have seen. The treatise *Forms of Spiritual Understanding*, written by Paulinus's contemporary Bishop Eucherius of Lyon, explains the palm as a symbol of 'perfection or victory', and of prolonged vitality, as in the Psalm text: 'the righteous man will flourish like a palm'.²⁰⁸ The expression 'palm [branches] of deeds', then, points to victory, regeneration, and perhaps immortality.²⁰⁹

What Paulinus appears to say is that when the written words describing (imagining) these 'victories' of holy power over evil were applied to the young man's chest, his simultaneously re-enacting the author's utter belief in these victories replicated them in his body. Can this process be understood as also a remembering of and return to his own imaginative re-enactment of the events as he had read about them a few days earlier? If so, we might surmise his having then also already stored this experience 'in his very entrails' as the incorporation of Perpetuus's images of Martin's and Christ's 'victories' over evil into what we might call his body self-image. What Paulinus may be describing, then, is the young man's activation of his earlier affective mimesis of the text, deepened through its incubation in his heart of hearts, and thereby his conscious assimilation — and now intentional affective replication — of its transformational leaps, which would activate analogous patterns in his body.

Paulinus, however, tells us that 'commanded by so many miracles, his sweat jolted up'; here the content of the written page exerts power, and his grandson is said to have in this way 'caught hold of whatever the page held hidden'. These words appear to point to the belief that the divine power patterns made visible in the miracles were held to be present also in their formally analogous written representations — in other words, that the words denoting power patterns participate

²⁰⁷ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione*, 43–54, CSEL, 16, p. 163: 'Ergo inter medios quos febris moverat ignes | virtutum palmas stomacho coniunxit anhelos, | et rapuit, recolendo fidem quae scripsit, in ipsis | condita visceribus quidquid conclusa tegebat | pagina, et ad votum velox medicina cucurrit. | exiliuit iussus tanta ad miracula sudor, | crevit et ad numerum tanti quoque muneris ordo, | ut scribenda fidem faciant, quam scripta retentant. | non tam perniciosi suspendunt sucina saltu | fistucam faeni vicini glute uaporis, | quam citus ad chartam madefacti corporis humor | mandato celerante redit.'

²⁰⁸ Eucherius, *Formulae spiritualis intelligentiae*, III, lines 343–44, CCSL, 66, p. 21. Cf. Psalm 91. 13 (92. 12).

²⁰⁹ Cf. Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, p. 724.

in their referent; the notion is traceable also in the writings of Gregory of Tours a century later.²¹⁰

Why 'command'? The term had been prominent in Sulpicius's descriptions of the living Saint Martin as a man of power. Here, the command is presumably that of Christ through Martin, transmitted not only through the mentioning of both their names in the text of the document (which, as such, would invoke their presence), but also through Christ's transformational power thought to be inherent in the written letters of the miracles' verbal representations.²¹¹

The rush of sweat is clearly understood as the beginning of recovery. Paulinus continues: 'Life now returning with hope, he tenderly called for his grandfather to announce the gift so great, and told me to add what he deeply felt to be his cure to the other signs.'²¹² The poet here appears to reveal knowledge of the then still continuing Hippocratic medical tradition; it asserted that profuse sweating on the seventh day of being afflicted with pneumonia was the beginning of recovery, and also that the perspiration helped noxious vapours or humours to escape from the body.²¹³ A brief reference to the subject's guilt and the saint's clemency as patron²¹⁴ follows that appears to point to the illness being perceived as a result of, or punishment for, some kind of sin. Thereafter Paulinus describes the actual recovery as a slower process: 'Soon, after the fitting number of days [of convalescence], which often deceives the hope and calculations of the ignorant patient, health was there, helped by prayers.'²¹⁵ These specifics, indicating that Paulinus had some medical knowledge, nevertheless did not preclude his firm conviction of the primacy of the spiritual element in healing. For he continues by saying that true grace is not confined by place, and its power is infinite:

²¹⁰ See de Nie, 'The "Power" of What is Said in the Book', pp. 24–25.

²¹¹ Christian amulets existed in this period: pieces of (folded) papyrus containing written prayers to, or invocations of, powerful names and/or containing formulaic putatively 'powerful' words, sometimes including Gospel descriptions of miracles, that were presumably worn on the body to ward off evil and disease; see *Ancient Christian Magic*, ed. by Meyer and Smith, pp. 33–42.

²¹² Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione*, 54–57, CSEL, 16, p. 163: 'spe vita revertens | affectu quaesivit avum quasi nuntia tanti | muneris, et reliquis iussit me iungere signis | quam persensit opem'.

²¹³ Siegel, *Galen's System of Physiology and Medicine*, pp. 326 and 103, respectively.

²¹⁴ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione*, 57–59, CSEL, 16, pp. 163–64.

²¹⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione*, 60–62, CSEL, 16, p. 164: 'nec mora commoditas, numerum praegressa dierum | quo saepe ignaros spes dinumerata fefellit, | auxiliis orantis adest'.

For curing touches that through which the Saviour is present. So far distant from the tomb, the room received what the waiting mind asked for, and it entered the place at the moment that it was believed to do so.²¹⁶

Christ's power through the saint is thus present through written words about him, but only if those words are truly believed. Most arresting, however, is the statement indicating *the temporal coincidence of the perceived impact of the healing energy with the imaginative act of its being believed to take place*. One is reminded of Christ's saying to the importuning blind Bartimaeus, 'Your faith has saved you' (Mark 10. 52).

But what is said to have happened here — ostensibly without any words being said — also resembles what we earlier saw to be Agnes Sanford's healing strategy,²¹⁷ insisting that to make a prayed-for healing occur, it *must* be firmly believed and concretely visualized as then actually taking place. She instructs her patients to conclude every prayer for healing with the command-like statement 'Amen', meaning (she says) 'This shall be' and states baldly: 'The law is that in praying we must believe that we are receiving the thing for which we pray [...] *that [it] is at that moment being accomplished*' (emphasis added).²¹⁸ In his own culture-specific way, Paulinus appears to have recognized this strategy more than fifteen centuries ago, and he is unlikely to have been the only one. Gregory of Tours's stories of cures, for instance, can be read as the enactment of a very similar, if unselfconscious, process.²¹⁹ Much later, in the high and later Middle Ages, similar patterns were acted out, and as we saw this happened in the past century too.²²⁰

Paulinus's description of his grandson's cure resembles what we have repeatedly indicated as happening today, not only through faith healing, but also through guided imagery therapies and shamanistic rituals all over the world. These all point to the fact that internalized representations or enacted visualizations of appropriate images play a decisive role in spiritual and physical healing, because of the

²¹⁶ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione*, 62–67, CSEL, 16, p. 164: 'Nec clauditur ullis | gratia vera locis, nec vires terminus artat | quas deus adcumulat. propter curatio tangit | qua salvator adest. tam longe abiuncta sepulchro | cellula suscepti, quod mens adtenta poposcit, | atque ipso ingressa est quo credita gratia puncto.'

²¹⁷ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 21–24.

²¹⁸ Sanford, *Healing Light*, pp. 56, 163.

²¹⁹ See, for instance, de Nie, 'History and Miracle', pp. 261–79.

²²⁰ Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel, *Miracula*. Carty, *Padre Pio, the Stigmatist*, shows that this modern saint's cures tend to continue the traditional patterns.

spontaneous affective mimesis they induce in the body as well as in the mind.²²¹ Through visualizing an appropriate image, otherwise inaccessible emotional patterns in our unconscious field can be addressed and transformed. And this, apparently, happens through a biological connection between mind and body which now appears to have been discovered: a biochemical compound acting as the biological correlate of emotions and attitudes.²²² Contacts with ancient non-western medical practices too, however, have stimulated the western medical profession towards a view that recognizes the presence of 'mind' or 'intelligence' throughout the body.²²³ This new mind-body medicine sees illness as originating in, and needing to be addressed as, a disharmony in this overall 'intelligence' that precedes and expresses itself in physical symptoms. Paulinus appears to have been right, then, about the soul's health preceding that of the body.²²⁴

The young man then helped his fiancée recover, but at first not without the curious fear of losing his own health if he let her touch the document too. Paulinus concludes by saying that he will praise the saint as long as he lives, and then asks him to take care of the other members of his family, who may or may not still have been pagans:

now look kindly upon the other members of my house, bringing back the alleviations of a speedy salvation, and comfort from close by my old age, committed to you, granting it soon what it wishes and protecting what has already been given.²²⁵

The poet thus appears to have been traumatized by loss — in all likelihood not only of his properties, but also of this grandson's parents.

Poetics of Compassion

Martin's memory, purposely neglected by his successor Briccius, had begun to be honoured in Tours only forty years after his death. After the middle of the fifth

²²¹ See Chopra, *Quantum Healing*, pp. 11–37 and passim; Moyers, *Healing and the Mind*; Heinze, *Shamans of the 20th Century*; and Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*.

²²² Moyers, *Healing and the Mind*, pp. 177–93.

²²³ Pert in Moyers, *Healing and the Mind*, p. 191.

²²⁴ As Pert in Moyers, *Healing and the Mind*, pp. 177–93; and Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, p. 19 and passim.

²²⁵ Paulinus of Périgueux, *Versus de visitatione*, 77–80, CSEL, 16, p. 164: 'nunc respice cetera clemens | membra domus, celeris revehens fomenta salutis, | et tibi commissam propior solare senectam, | optata indulgens propere vel praestita servans'.

century, Paulinus re-presented the once-eccentric Martin at Bishop Perpetuus's request as 'a saint for our times' and an effective heavenly patron at the moment that the Arian Visigoths stood ready to take over the city and the region. Expanding from the north, the Catholic Frankish king Clovis was to take it from them sixteen years later and — influenced also by Paulinus's prestigious epic? — to adopt Saint Martin as the special patron of the Frankish monarchy. We may surmise that Paulinus's elegant poem will have helped to prepare educated minds, if not also those of unlettered Franks and ordinary churchgoers, to accept the saint as a personal ideal, a powerful, if invisible, friend in need, and even as a real, if invisible, governor of earthly society in his region.

It looks as though the poet's 'change of awareness' was a personal conversion that affectively assimilated him to what he discerned to be Martin's 'abundant compassion'; it made him able to describe the events of the saint's life from the inside, as it were, in such a way as to enlist the reader's or listener's empathy. The beauty to be sought was not that of varicoloured visible appearances but that of an invisible divine harmony in the saint's holy heart that shone as light through his radiant face — now made visible for the first time.

What Paulinus added to Sulpicius's stories were many visual and psychological details that made the man and the events come alive, but he also drew out and amplified the moral and spiritual 'lessons' which Sulpicius had left implicit. Like Sedulius's imaginative version of the Gospel miracles, Paulinus presents Martin's healings as visualizations of Christ's salvational 'mysteries', and this makes his poem, even more than Sulpicius's original, 'a catechism in images'. His found/invented²²⁶ dynamic images to represent the invisible are now often also psychological patterns. By omitting mundane details and superimposing these images upon the visible appearances, his presentation of miracles appears also to have been intended to precipitate a trusting, non-discursive state of mind in the reader. This would have helped to precipitate an affective mimesis of the poem's image-patterns representing the saint's miracles that revealed, and, to the receptive reader/listener, perhaps transmitted, the *living, compassionate poetics* of the divine 'mysteries' that, also through Martin, were constantly becoming embodied in the visible world.

²²⁶ Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, p. 246.

POETICS OF WONDER

What we have watched happening in the testimonies examined are successive attempts to understand a new pattern of being: the very much unexpected first experiences in the western Latin world of what was known to have been an ancient transforming and life-changing phenomenon in the earliest days of the Church. The collective result of these testimonies was the creation of a new composite *imaginaire* of miracles, focusing upon the imaged symbolizing of their spiritual/affective dynamics as more direct intimations of the faith's mysteries than the formulation of these in verbal doctrines and precepts. This affective-figurative approach influenced not only the recorded perception of subsequent similar events, and almost certainly their now irrecoverable experience, but also the ways in which the truths of faith could be understood in the centuries that followed. In the late sixth century, for instance, Gregory of Tours's stories can be seen to exhibit an unreflective form of this mode of thinking.

The appearance of miracles at martyrs' shrines that began in the east appears to have stimulated Bishop Ambrose of Milan to initiate incorporation of the cult's new miracles in the west as a divine support, first for the Church's doctrine, and later also for its governing power. In the first decades after 386, he and many others made sense of the new miracles — long regarded by Church authorities as no longer necessary and better to do without — by presenting them as renewals of biblical and apostolic ones, effected by a grace that announced the now more imminent return of Christ and the saints. The collective enthusiasm engendered by this notion shows through our texts and must have stimulated the experiencing of even more miracles. People who doubted or asked too many questions were advised just to trust what they saw happening. Soon, however, persistent failure to do this began to be perceived as a threat to the collective perception of the newly enhanced spiritual status of the Church and as a betrayal of the community now based upon

this, and castigated as a lack of faith in Christ's explicit promises that would invite dire consequences in the next life. Although Cassian's fifth-century monks were advised to avoid the performance of miracles in their midst as temptations to spiritual pride, they too now recognized their possible occurrence among themselves. By the 420s, the new phenomenon appears to have become an accepted fact in the lifeworld of many Christians.

In Juvencus's early fourth-century poetic synthesis of the Gospels, however, miracles had been described only as visible events without their own cognitive value; precepts had been foregrounded as communicating the central religious truths. The rhetorically sophisticated Ambrose and Augustine continued this practice, using the details of biblical miracle stories as allegories of doctrinal points that were not infrequently only indirectly or not at all related to the event itself, still understood only as a manifestation of divine power without cognitive value. Sulpicius Severus, the first in the west to describe the miracles of a living saint, presented them as extramissions of power through a total transparency to the heavenly Christ; his intentionally terse descriptions, however, can now also be understood as covertly pointing to Martin's miracles as symbolically acting out the faith's central doctrines. It is with Paulinus of Nola's elaborately imaginative descriptions of miracles as figures and epiphanies of the faith's deeper experiential truths that miraculous events themselves gradually came to be recognized as treasure troves of cognition. Sedulius's new early fifth-century poetic synthesis of the Gospels then replaces Juvencus's, Ambrose's, and Augustine's essentially word-centred approach to the 'mysteries' of the faith with his poetic invitation to a quasi-sacramental interior enactment of the symbolic images representing the spiritual realities at work in Christ's miracles. Reflecting the contemporary new prominence of the meditative approach, current in ascetic circles, that privileged imagistic over discursive mental processes, his epic poem manifests the changed understanding of the faith in the early fifth century in its placing, not verbal precepts and doctrines, but the transformational moments of miracles at the centre of an experiential faith.

Basing my approach on the modern clinical and medical evidence which shows that, alongside the effect of autonomous exterior energies, it is in and through the imagistic or dream consciousness that psychic and physical healing tends to take place, I have attempted to show that the new miracles are likely to have taken place in a similar state of mind. The descriptions of the dream cures in *Uzalis*, especially, appear to prove this point. Paulinus of Périgueux's later fifth-century refigurations of Sulpicius's intentionally 'bare' descriptions of Martin's miracles as epiphanies of Christ's compassionate 'mysteries' show how the shift to a meditative, imagistic mentality affected subsequent hagiography. His unique detailed description of a

cure he personally witnessed moreover shows that, in his own time- and culture-conditioned language, he was well aware of the imaginative dynamics involved in spiritual healing as they are also observed today.

Whether one regards our authors' clusters of dynamic images around miracles as culturally shaped visualizations of hope, as poetic intuitions and reveries, as manifestations of unconscious psychic patterns or archetypes, or as epiphanies of autonomous interior/exterior spiritual dynamics and energies — these could be different aspects of one and the same phenomenon — they exhibit recurring configurations. The clusters seem to represent breakthrough moments of sensed empowerment, revitalization, protection, compassion, nurture, purification, illumination, liberation, restoration, rebirth — all emerging from an affectively sensed reconnection with what is (implicitly) believed to be the continuously creating cosmic Christ. The transforming effect is often described as the result of a subject's affective assimilation of specific root images or symbols of this creative principle, deriving directly or indirectly from the Bible. The more traditional ones are *light* as divine healing energy and power, and the *Cross* as the symbol of Christ's victory over Evil or as the fruit-bearing and fecundizing *Vine* or *Tree of Life* that is inherent in the world. New images or visualizations of dynamic affective-spiritual patterns appear to be the *jewels* as visible 'virtues' or powers, *overflowing oil*, apparently symbolizing the Fount of Life, *the unbreakable flask* as a figure of the fragile human self protected by a saint's blessing, and — most poignantly — the saint's shining, loving, and *empowering face*, perhaps reflecting that of (the inner) Christ.

In this book, I have attempted to let each distant voice, sometimes forgotten or neglected, tell its own uniquely created 'dream', 'myth', or 'saga' of what its author had experienced and/or imagined to be a 'miracle' — to let its 'poetics of wonder' speak to us today. For these late antique authors, their imaged or poetic dreams were true, if not as entirely historical fact, then as representing their experience of the invisible transforming patterns of their faith as the real truth about life and the world. I hope to have shown that what the images, which they 'found' in and through their imagination to describe the miracles they themselves or others experienced, reveal are living — perhaps transcendental — psychic/spiritual patterns that can still transform and heal hearts and bodies in our modern world.

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- BS* *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, 12 vols (Rome: Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1961–69)
- CCSL* *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954–)
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1866–)
- DACL* *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, ed. by Fernand Cabrol and others, 15 vols (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1924–94)
- DS* *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique, Doctrine et Histoire*, ed. by Marcel Viller and others, 17 vols (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–94)
- EER* *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 13 vols (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908–21)
- ER* *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Mircea Eliade and others [1st edn], 16 vols (New York: MacMillan, 1987)
- ER*² *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Lindsay Jones and others, 2nd edn, 15 vols (Detroit: Thomson & Gale, 2005)
- LTK* *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. by Walter Kasper and others, 3rd edn, 11 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1993–2001)
- MGH SsRM* *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* (Hannover: Hahn, 1885–1951)
- NCE* *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd edn, 15 vols (Detroit: Thomson & Gale, 2003)
- NIDNTT* *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975–78)
- RAC* *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. by Theodor Klauser and others, 16 vols (Stuttgart: Hiersemann-G.M.B.H., 1950–2001)
- RCA* *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, rev. by Georg Wissowa, 84 vols (Stuttgart: Alfred Druckenmüller, 1893–1978)
- PG* *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1857–96)
- PL* *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1844–95)

- PLS *Patrologia Latina Supplementum*, ed. by Adalbert Hamman, 5 vols (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1958–74)
- RGG *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by Hans Dieter Betz and others, 4th edn, 4 vols (Tübingen: Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1998–2007)
- RTAM *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 63 vols (Leuven: Abbaye du Mont César, 1929–96)
- SC *Sources chrétiennes* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1941–)
- TRE *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, 36 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977–2007)

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